

No whiff of grapeshot, but Soames of the Hussars has a good war

IS MY Right Hon friend [Defence Secretary Michael Portillo] aware that when the hon Member for Crawley [Armed Forces Minister Nicholas Soames] was an 11th Hussars officer fightin' for Queen and country, the R Hon gentleman the Leader of the Opposition [Tony Blair] and 12 of his cronies wuz crawlin' around Greenham Common in CND T-shirts wiv their legs and arms in the air, ready to give up...?" the rest was drowned in bellows. The wonderful thing about

a question from David Evans (C. Welwyn & Hatfield) is that it may come borne upon a raft of assertions each one of which, taken individually, is absurd, doubtful, grammatically defective, physically impossible, wholly inexplicable or just plain wrong - yet you always know what he means. He has a point.

His question yesterday to the Defence Secretary was ludicrous. When Mr Soames was a Hussars officer, Tony Blair was 14, the Greenham women hardly born. The

three years Soames spent with the Hussars, from 1967, passed during peacetime. There were no Mafekings to relieve or Khyber Passes to brave. Few doubt that this gallant man would be celebrated as Soames of Khartoum, Burma Soames or Nick "Zulu" Soames if only fate had given him the chance, but fate never did. Instead, he became Equerry to Prince Charles - further from the whiff of grapeshot than the Greenham women.

And it is simply untrue that

MATTHEW PARRIS

POLITICAL SKETCH

Tony Blair joined these women. In youth he was more likely to be found clad in a white cassock, on his knees in prayer than in a muddy tent among militant women with hairy armpits. Nobody, not even Mr Blair, is capable of crawlin' with the legs or arms in the air, let alone both.

All Mr Evans meant was

that Mr Soames was once in the Army and Mr Blair was once a supporter of nuclear disarmament. But he had a point. His Tory mates came roaring to his support.

Yesterday at least, Soames had a good war. Evans can be forgiven for picturing him as some kind of heavyweight lancer, for Nicholas Soames

seems to come from a bygone age. Rescuing himself in mid-sentence from calling the Army "the infantry" he joshed Labour's principal defence spokesman, Dr David Clark, for having proposed (the claimed) a swords-into-ploughshares reincarnation of the British weapons industry.

The Labour Front Bench came back hard. Soames's opposite number, Dr John Reid, taunted him over press reports that Conservative Central Office have banned

egy caused hilarity, notably from Soames, who sat down hugging himself and chortling some more.

A jolly day. But we noticed one depressing change. Robed in something rich and strange and outshining every other MP, Dame Jill Knight (C. Edgbaston) has for years dazzled and delighted us with her fizzy. But yesterday she turned up in a sober suit of forest green and black. Has Dame Jill seen John Major's new hat in *The Times* - and accepted defeat?

Hogg sparks fresh row by snubbing mad cow inquiry

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN BRUSSELS AND ANDREW PIERCE

A FURTHER confrontation between the Government and the European Union was triggered yesterday by Douglas Hogg, the Agriculture Minister, when he dismissed the threat of legal action over his refusal to give evidence to a European Parliament inquiry into BSE.

Mr Hogg, in a defiant performance which cheered Tory Eurosceptics, said that European Parliament committees had no power to summon British ministers. "British ministers are accountable to the House of Commons. A number of members of the European Committee have aspirations to a supervisory role over the ministers of sovereign states. I don't share that view. I don't think we should encourage those aspirations."

Mr Hogg was one of a number of senior politicians and EU officials called to give evidence to the four-month inquiry last year. But twice, to the fury of the European Parliament, he refused. He sent instead Richard Packer, the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Mr Packer infuriated the inquiry committee when he claimed that BSE had been caused "largely by an act of God".

A draft report by the committee published yesterday was highly critical of Britain's handling of the BSE crisis. It listed 13 charges of maladministration, negligence and irresponsibility in dealing with the mad cow scare.

Reiner Böge, chairman of the inquiry, said yesterday Britain should be taken to the European Court over Mr Hogg's refusal to attend, which he said breached an agreement that member state ministers should co-operate with their work. He said the credibility of the European Parliament was at stake.

Herr Böge added: "The

legal position is clear. In domestic terms this is explosive stuff." Herr Böge, a German Euro-MP, repeated the challenge to Mr Hogg to face the committee. "It is quite clear that the minister has to come to a Committee of Inquiry if he is invited. If we let this matter pass, we will be setting a precedent for the future."

While Mr Hogg's uncompromising stance won support from Tory MPs, many of whom have been critical of his handling of the BSE crisis, Brussels observers predicted that legal action was unlikely to materialise. They believe Mr Hogg was deliberately flexing his muscles on an issue he knew he would win.

Speaking *The World* at One on BBC Radio, Mr Hogg brushed aside the legal threat. The minister, who has the support of Cabinet colleagues for his stance, said: "The question is whether a minister should be summoned by a European committee to give evidence. The clear answer to that is 'No'. There is no basis for that. If they bring legal action of that kind, they will lose it."

Herr Böge is planning to table amendments to the report outlining the options for

legal action against Britain. The European Parliament will vote on the report on February 19, raising the possibility of legal moves against Britain before the general election.

The Prime Minister, who was returning from India yesterday, was kept up to date on developments. A Downing Street spokesman said: "We have always said that British ministers are answerable to Westminster. It is not for them to be summoning us to the European Parliament."

A Tory official said that there was no prospect of ministers backing down. He said: "Douglas Hogg is neither going to give evidence nor end up in a court of law over this. Beef sales in Britain are restored virtually to their level before the BSE scare. A German chaired this committee. In Germany beef sales have not recovered at all. We take action. They carp."

Tory MPs rallied behind Mr Hogg yesterday. David Nicholson, secretary of the Tory backbench agriculture committee, said: "British ministers are absolutely within their rights in refusing to co-operate, particularly when the offensive and 'objectionable' BSE ban on British beef is still in place."

But Labour and the Liberal Democrats accused Mr Hogg of running scared over BSE which had damaged the prospects of an early lifting of the beef ban.

Gavin Strang, the Shadow Agriculture Minister, said: "Douglas Hogg should have taken the opportunity to speak out to the committee all the measures that we now have in place."

"He should have led from the front and put the position of the British Government. The minister's failings, and the damning indictment in the report, will not have helped Britain's efforts to get the beef ban lifted."

Herr Böge is unlikely to face legal action over BSE



First choice: Dr Watkins, who had a full examination

GPs given check-up by choosy villagers

A VILLAGE is thought to have become the first in the country to choose its own doctor.

Three shortlisted GPs were questioned by 60 local people in the village hall. One resident of every street was invited to the meeting by the local health authority which selected the three. After the hour-long meeting the villagers announced their choice Nigel Watkins.

He will look after the health of 700 people in the former mining village of Bedlinog, near Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales. Dr Watkins, 36, a father-of-two, said: "I was delighted when the patients decided to back me. I won't let them down."

Normally health authorities appoint GPs with advice from the Medical Practices Committee to ensure an even distribution of doctors throughout the country.

Gwyn Phillips, chief executive of Bro Taf health authority, said other communities should consider the system. He said: "It is important for a GP to have the full confidence of his patients."

Lawrence widow joins forces with royal trust

BY JOANNA BALE

FRANCES LAWRENCE, the widow of the murdered headmaster Philip Lawrence, is to join with the Prince's Trust to promote good citizenship and help to prevent the growth of violent crime among young people.

She will attend a private meeting at St James's Palace next month with senior representatives of charities, government departments and voluntary groups, co-ordinated by the trust, to discuss ways of putting her ideas into practice. Mrs Lawrence, who published her moral manifesto in *The Times* last year, said: "I am very keen to ensure that the large body of support shown for my manifesto is channelled into practical measures."

Dick Newby, the trust's communications director, said: "The purpose of the meeting is to take up and move forward some of the issues that Mrs Lawrence has raised." He added that the hundreds of people who wrote to Mrs Lawrence offering practical support would also be considered.

The Prince of Wales, who established the trust in 1976, will not be present at the meeting, but was said to be taking a "keen interest". The trust aims to help disadvantaged young people to succeed by providing training, education, financial assistance and business start-up advice.

Mr Newby added that Mrs Lawrence was not associated with the People's Trust, a new campaign funded by the chairman of Harrods, Mohamed Al Fayed, to put morality at the heart of government policy-making, despite reports that she had given it his backing.

Police are investigating a bogus letter sent to MPs which claims to be from Mrs Lawrence and makes anti-Semitic remarks about the Labour MP Greville Janner, a campaigner for Jewish causes. Mrs Lawrence has told police that she has no knowledge of such an organisation.

Leading article, page 17

Law firm sued over trainee's dysentery

A trainee solicitor who contracted shigella dysentery while abroad on a business trip is suing Freshfields, the City law firm, for more than £633,000 for loss of career as a lawyer, personal injury and distress. Kate Cawthorn, 25, claims Freshfields was negligent in failing to ensure she had the proper inoculations for her trip or give dietary or other advice. She has been unable to work since the trip to Ghana in 1994. Ms Cawthorn's writ, disclosed in *The Lawyer* magazine yesterday, also alleges that the firm failed to act promptly in sending her home when she developed diarrhoea and painful stomach pains.

Freshfields is resisting the claim. Ian Terry, its managing partner, said the firm was awaiting medical reports and was happy to sit down with Ms Cawthorn and resolve the issue.

Football riot arrests

Five men were arrested in England in connection with a football riot in Dublin two years ago. Four appeared in court and another is due in court today after Irish authorities issued extradition warrants after fighting at the international at Lansdowne Road between England and Ireland in February 1995. The National Criminal Intelligence Service said they would be charged with various offences in Ireland if the extraditions went ahead. The warrants were issued for alleged "offences of riot and violent disorder".

Showboat must go on

With only weeks before curtain-up, an amateur opera group in Belfast cannot find black performers to fill the central roles in a production of *Showboat*, the Jerome Kern musical about the American slave trade. The paucity of black people in Northern Ireland has left the Belfast Operatic Company unable to cast Queenie and Joe, and Willie Pyper, who is directing the week-long run at the Belfast Opera House in March, is urgently seeking black or Asian people. "They don't need to have acted or sung before," he said.

Call for rabies review

Relaxation of Britain's tough quarantine rules for rabies should be considered if alternative controls can be shown to be equally effective, the Pet Advisory Committee told the Government. It called for an urgent "risk assessment and feasibility study" of a system based on vaccination, blood tests and microchip identification with a view to easing the rules for dogs and cats from other European Union and rabies-free countries if it proved workable.

Paedophile suspects list

British detectives are flying to the Philippines with a list of names of British paedophile suspects for Manila investigators. The team also hopes to learn of local intelligence on the operations of so-called child sex tourists from this country. The trip will prepare the way for operating the Sex Offenders Bill under which British courts can prosecute people for child sex offences abroad. Unicef estimates that 60,000 children are abused in the Philippines.

Father and sons on trial

A father and his two sons went on trial at Leeds Crown Court yesterday accused of murdering their mother. David Howells, 47, and his boys Glenn and John, who were 14 and 15 respectively at the time of the alleged killing in August 1995, deny the murder of Eve Howells, 48, a history and religious instruction teacher, in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire. Mr Justice Alliott, the trial judge, adjourned the hearing until tomorrow.

Beer cheers Bullimore

The rescued yachtsman Tony Bullimore drank his first beer after arriving on dry land yesterday. Mr Bullimore, who was released from hospital in Perth after treatment for frostbite, said it was a sweet moment. "I have just had a beer, one little small glass of beer, and that was ecstasy." Mr Bullimore, who is 58 today, has had most of one finger removed but has been told by doctors that he will probably not need further surgery and should make a full recovery.

Free entry into lottery

About 21,000 National Lottery players who bought multi-draw tickets on January 4 are to get free entry into the draws up to March 1. To take account of the launch of Wednesday draws from February 5, the computer should have allowed players to stake numbers for up to five Saturdays. Instead, it accepted entries for the maximum eight weeks and entered them in the midweek draws. Some people could have discovered too late their numbers were not in the last few draws.

Judge's rough justice

An unemployed defendant who could not afford an overnight stay before the start of his trial was reprimanded for his late arrival by a judge who said: "He could have sat on a park bench or waited around at the railway station." James Spencer, 31, from Nottingham, who had to travel 150 miles to Gloucester Crown Court for the 10.30am case, angered Judge Hutton by failing to arrive until 1.25pm. The housing charity Shelter said the remark was "amazing".

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Minister gives hope of a concession for Gurkhas

BY ALICE THOMSON, POLITICAL REPORTER

THE Government has bowed to pressure from all sides at Westminster and looks likely to allow Gurkha soldiers to bring their families if they are posted to Britain. Peers also complained that the soldiers received only one eighth of the pensions of British servicemen.

Lord Sahabud Deuba, the Nepalese Prime Minister, had asked John Major for a pledge that Britain would allow Gurkhas to bring their families and would raise their pensions.

Lord Howe admitted that accompanied married service was a "legitimate aspiration" for the Brigade of Gurkhas and said that an announcement would be made next month. It is unlikely, however, that their pensions will be raised to the same level as their British counterparts.

Peers accused the Government

of being "hard-hearted".

Viscount Slim, a crossbencher who served as a Gurkha officer, demanded a "pretty quick" resolution of the issue.

Lord Wyatt of Weeford, a crossbencher, said: "Everybody knows what the answer ought to be. Why can't you give it now?"

Lord Williams of Elvel, for Labour, said the Gurkhas "should be treated as an integral part of the British armed forces. This is a matter of urgency."

Lord Howe said there had been a "wide-ranging review" of Gurkha terms and conditions of service. But there were still implications for health care, education and social security benefits that had to be considered.

moderate use of imprisonment," Mr Shaw added.

He praised Mr Hurd for being willing to spend some of his time supporting the cause of prison reform. In his job, Mr Hurd will be expected to chair the trust's private and public meetings and lead delegations to see officials and ministers.

His appointment was welcomed last night by other prison reformers. Sir Stephen Tumlin, formerly Chief Inspector of Prisons, said: "Prisons are under the greatest stress and they really need somebody of Douglas Hurd's stature and experience to support their work."

He agreed that the trust's proposals and the Home Secretary's "prison works" policy which has taken an annual budget of £250,000 and is funded entirely by charitable donations.

Stephen Shaw, director of the trust, said: "Douglas Hurd's decision to join us is a tremendous boost for the cause of a more effective, more humane and more just penal system during the remainder of the decade."

He said it was a unique decision by a former Home Secretary to join a campaigning charity, particularly one as controversial as the Prison Reform Trust. "His will be a powerful voice arguing for a decent, effective and more

Hurd interview, page 12

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Footballers deny plot to fix matches for cash

By LIN JENKINS

JOHN FASHANU, former footballer and star of *Gladiators*, and Bruce Grobelaar, one of the best known faces in the English game, appeared in court yesterday accused of involvement in fixing matches. Mr Grobelaar, the former Liverpool goalkeeper, was said to have collected £40,000 to throw a single match.

He, Mr Fashanu, and Hans Segers, goalkeeper at Mr Fashanu's club, Wimbledon, agreed to take part in match-fixing for a Far Eastern betting syndicate. Winchester Crown Court was told. Their co-accused, Heng Suan Lim, a Malaysian businessman, was said to be acting for the syndicate.

David Calvert-Smith, for the prosecution, told the court that the plot was uncovered in a "sting" operation by reporters from *The Sun* who filmed Mr Grobelaar allegedly accepting £2,000 from a former business associate.

He said that Mr Fashanu, Wimbledon striker at the time, acted as intermediary, while Mr Grobelaar and Mr Segers, the two goalkeepers, accepted cash to rig matches by influencing the result.

Mr Fashanu, 33, of St John's Wood, north London, Mr Grobelaar, 39, of Bramley, Surrey, Mr Segers, 34, of Fleet, Hampshire, and Mr Lim, 30, of Cricklewood, north London, deny conspiring to give and corruptly to accept gifts of money as inducements improperly to influence or attempt to influence the outcome of football matches or as rewards for having done so, between February 1991 and November 1994 and, in the



Hans Segers, left, John Fashanu and Bruce Grobelaar, right, outside Winchester Crown Court yesterday on the opening day of their trial. They are accused of corruption



Mr Calvert-Smith said that

Mr Grobelaar, who was born in Zimbabwe, had been capped eight times for his country, had become embittered when his £160,000-a-year salary, earned at the height of his career at Liverpool, began to fall below that of younger players. He then became involved with the Indonesia-based syndicate after he was lured by the offer of a £40,000 to £60,000 payout to throw one match. The prosecution said that the syndicate aimed to rig a Liverpool



Mr Vincent had told *The Sun* that

Mr Grobelaar had thrown matches for money from Mr Lim. Mr Vincent had recounted how on one occasion Mr Grobelaar had flown to London to pick up £40,000 from Mr Fashanu. It was the largest single payment uncovered by police.

Mr Vincent had said that Mr Grobelaar had told him in advance that he was going to do the business this weekend and when Liverpool lost 3-0 away to Newcastle in November, 1993. He had telephoned him and described it as a "good result".

Four days later, Mr Vincent



where did he get the money?

Mr Calvert-Smith said.

Mr Vincent had also said that Mr Grobelaar had his own secret code and would refer to a win as "a Wimbleton", a draw as "a Dundee" and a loss as "a Leeds".

Mr Calvert-Smith said that in *The Sun* newspaper sting, Mr Grobelaar had accepted £2,000 from a fictitious betting syndicate which promised him £100,000 if the result of a particular match went the right way. As a result, police had begun an investigation and uncovered systematic corruption over 3½ years.

Mr Calvert-Smith said

some people would ask how it was possible for a single player to fix a match. "He may never have any opportunity to do so. His teammates or the opposition may frustrate him. Indeed, the Crown say that happened in January 1994 with Liverpool versus Manchester United. There is, of course, a limit to what people can do in front of 40 or 50,000 people and a television audience of millions which is not clear and obvious. You could not just let the ball roll between your legs. But goalkeepers do sometimes make mistakes, so the odd mistake can slip through."

He said that from 10,000 documents accumulated in evidence, a picture of corruption had emerged. *Hans* and *mobile telephone bills* had shown Mr Segers and Mr Lim first began calling one another in August 1992 and Mr Grobelaar and Mr Lim in November that year.

A snapshot of the bills on a day Wimbledon lost to Ipswich showed Mr Lim ringing a Mr Josef in Indonesia and then telephoning Mr Fashanu and Mr Segers, sometimes calling a telephone in the name of Buckley which Mr Fashanu used; he also held a bank account in that name. The calls would be back-to-back in quick succession, Mr Calvert-Smith said.

The Crown suggests that they give rise to a strong inference that the motive for the calls was the same.

He said that Mr Segers, who earned £80,000 a year, deposited large sums in a Swiss bank account, particularly after Wimbledon had lost matches. "These were not his salary or bonuses or lawfully obtained."

He had told police that it was the proceeds of crime in his youth. "The story of how he came by all this cash is implausible in the extreme," Mr Calvert-Smith said.

The case continues.

HANS SEGERS was born in Eindhoven, The Netherlands, and joined Wimbledon as a goalkeeper in the same year as Mr Fashanu. His average annual income with the club had been £80,000. He began his career with PSV Eindhoven and played in the same Dutch under-18 side as Ruud Gullit, the Chelsea manager. He joined Wimbledon from Nottingham Forest for a transfer fee of £125,000. Last summer he signed for Wolverhampton Wanderers.

JOHN FASHANU was a striker for Wimbledon Football Club from 1986 to August 1994. He played more than 300 games for the team, known as the Crazy Gang, scoring 129 goals and collecting an FA Cup winner's medal in 1988. His salary averaged £200,000. He transferred to Aston Villa in the month that Mr Grobelaar went to Southampton, and received a signing-on fee of £200,000. He transferred to Southampton and played more than 30 games before moving to his present club, Plymouth Argyle.

Partisan jurors weeded out before the case kicks off

By LIN JENKINS

POTENTIAL jurors in the match-fixing case were asked whether they supported a football team before they were selected. One man who admitted to being a Liverpool supporter was quickly disqualified for someone without strong affiliations.

The judge, Mr Justice Tuckey, said that employees of *The Sun* or committed fans of Liverpool, Southampton or Wimbledon would not be considered eligible.

When one man claimed he might not be able to last the trial because of a holiday booked for April, the judge quipped: "We'll take a bet on you. Sorry, we won't take a bet

on you," as counsel and the footballers laughed.

Other potential jurors were excused because they had young children at home, had to care for ill relatives or ran a family business that could not do without them for the estimated eight weeks of the trial.

As he opened the prosecution case, David Calvert-Smith complained that he felt as if he were "more in the dugout than on the pitch". He craned his neck to see over the vast rows of box files containing copies of the 10,000 documents in the case and the numbers were swelled by reporters. Proceedings are being relayed by speaker into another court for the overspill.

Knife killer snooped on ex-girlfriend

By KATHRYN KNIGHT

A DOCTOR'S daughter and her boyfriend were stabbed to death by her spurned lover after he secretly recorded them in a bedroom, a court was told yesterday.

Fiona Ovis, 28, and William Crompton, 18, were stabbed repeatedly by Andrew Cole, who broke into her bungalow when he listened via a microphone through the letterbox.

Chester Crown Court was told, afterwards, he cycled to a hospital where he produced a bloodstained knife, saying: "I murdered her."

Cole, 26, of Llandrindod Wells, Powys, has admitted killing the couple last May but denies murder on the grounds of diminished responsibility and provocation.

The jury was told that Cole had had a relationship for several months with Miss Ovis, the daughter of a GP, Lord Thomas of Gresford, QC, for the prosecution, said that the week before the killings, Cole had been sedated in hospital for four days because of his distress at her new relationship.

Thirty-six hours after his release, he put a microphone from a tape recorder through her letterbox. Cole told police "I played it back and heard music and moans and groans. I just flipped."

The trial continues.

Prostitute 'gave taxman solace'

By TIM JONES

A SENIOR tax investigator yesterday broke down in the witness box in the Old Bailey as he described how family and work worries drove him into the arms of a prostitute.

Michael Alcock, 47, told a jury that he had begun an affair with Michelle Corrigan, 30, when his wife had been recovering from cancer. Mr Alcock, from Colchester, Essex, who denies 11 charges of corruption, said that because of his wife's illness the mood at home was very bleak. "We had some dark times. We were both frightened."

He told the court that he had first met Miss Corrigan through Hishan Alwan, one of the businessmen who was being investigated by the office

of the Inland Revenue where he worked as a group leader. The Iraqi-born oil consultant was, he said, one of the few men he could talk to about his problems. "I asked him if he could give me a name of someone who I could have a night out with to forget my problems." Mr Alwan, he said, had put him in touch with Miss Corrigan.

Mr Alcock and Miss Corrigan had gone to bed together. Mr Alcock said that Mr Alwan then told him he had paid Miss Corrigan between £200 and £250. "I paid him in cash. Nothing more was said."

Eventually, Mr Alcock developed an emotional attachment to Miss Corrigan. "We became kindred spirits." Miss Corrigan was like himself, "emotionally damaged" and they "needed each other".

Questioned by Anthony Arlidge, QC, for the defence, Mr Alcock agreed that he had bought expensive clothes for her. "I wanted to change her from a bimbo to something more elegant," he said. Some of the money that he had used to buy expensive cars had come from his wife's relatives.

Mr Alcock totally rejected the suggestion that he had been given money by taxpayers.

Mr Alcock, 54, denies three charges of corruption.

The case continues.



Alcock was concerned over his wife's illness

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Court backs police who took farmer's gun licence away

By GILLIAN BOWDITCH, SCOTLAND CORRESPONDENT

POLICE were right to revoke the gun licence of a fisherman who was mugged when he went out at night with a shotgun to protect his trout, a sheriff ruled yesterday.

Sheriff Kenneth Mure said that Derek Button, 60, of Sauchieburn, Stirlingshire, had been "imprudent and incautious" in arming himself with a double-barrelled shotgun when he went out in his pyjamas after an alarm went off.

Mr Button had contrasted his treatment with that of Thomas Hamilton, the gunman who killed 16 children and their teacher nearby in Dunblane. He said that Central Scotland Police had rejected pleas to revoke Hamilton's licence, despite a damning report from one of their own officers. "I was an ordinary

farmer attacked on my own land while trying to protect my stock, and yet my licence was taken off me in hours." He said that he suffered constant losses with fish being taken by herons, cormorants, mink and poachers.

At an earlier hearing in November, Mr Button said that a letter from Central Scotland Police had been hand-delivered to him on the day of the attack, even though he was a victim and not a criminal.

He had been alerted at 2am on May 10 by an alarm which indicated that something or someone was raiding his trout pond. He loaded his gun with blanks, put two live rounds in his pyjama pocket and headed off, unsure whether a poacher or an animal had triggered the alarm. About 50 metres from

his house he saw a figure crouched over the pond fishing, but, as he approached, he was struck on the head and collapsed. When he came to, his gun was gone. He was kept in hospital for three weeks after the attack.

Central Scotland Police later recovered the gun in one of the fishponds. One barrel had been discharged. Within 12 hours of the attack, Mr Button's licence to hold a shotgun and a .22 rifle were revoked by the force. He had held his rifle licence for 27 years and his shotgun licence for six years.

Mr Button and his wife, Morag, have spent six years turning barren marshland into a thriving fish-farming business producing 15 tonnes of trout and char a year. Anglers come from all over central Scotland, but poachers, vermin and dogs are also frequent visitors.

In his written judgment, Sheriff Mure said the trip wire was set too high from the ground to be triggered by mink and, while it could be set off by a bigger animal, its main purpose was to deter poachers.

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Mr Mure said: "The Chief Constable was concerned that the applicant had left his house with a shotgun in his possession in the possible belief of poachers trespassing on his premises. He was concerned about the danger to individuals of discharging even blank ammunition."

The judgment said the use of firearms to control vermin was accepted but not to protect property or person.

Mr Mure said: "The Chief Constable was critical of the fact that his officers were not alerted immediately, and before Mr Button himself investigated the presence of intruders."

Some locals have expressed concern that the new design will not blend with the surroundings. The present house has traditionally styled rooms, many with oak beams. Branagh originally

applied for planning permission under the name Michael J. Smith of Kingsbury upon Thames. In the latest application he used his own name.

The property is in 12 acres with a lake, woods and a paddock. It is a few miles from Ascot. Branagh plans to spend £1 million on building the house, which

will have a triple garage and a swimming pool complex.

The cinema is expected to seat between 70 and 100 and cost about £150,000. The house will have four bedrooms. The master bedroom will have an indoor swimming pool and billiards room and put the property on the market last January.

Keepers, originally a lodge house, was extended by its

former owner, Ken Gumbay, a builder and plant hire entrepreneur, to have six bedrooms and four reception rooms. He also built an indoor swimming pool and billiards room and put the property on the market last January.

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Catholic schools widen their net to fill places

By RUTH GOGARTY

ROMAN Catholic independent schools are turning increasingly to pupils from other Churches to fill places, as growing numbers of wealthy Catholics send their children to rival public schools.

Children from other Churches are now in the majority at four out of ten Catholic independent schools, according to a survey published today. It says that the "dilution of the Catholic nature of our schools" is continuing, with only one school refusing to accept non-Catholic children.

Half of the 100 schools surveyed had increased pupil rolls over the past five years, although nearly a fifth had declined by more than 10 per cent. The research, by the Catholic Independent Schools Conference, also shows that a quarter were unable to fill all their places. Only 46 per cent had more applicants than places.

The survey highlights the trend towards fewer monks or nuns on the staff of such schools. Nearly half had no

religious" on the staff, compared with 35 per cent a year ago. More than half reported difficulty recruiting staff with the right religious and academic qualifications.

The survey has been published shortly after some of the leading independent Catholic schools pleaded for greater support from parents and bishops as increasing numbers of parents send their children to other public schools. For example, Epsom, which appointed a Catholic chaplain in the early 1980s, now has nearly 150 Catholic boys, compared with a handful two years ago.

Father Anthony Sutcliffe, Head Master of Downside, near Bath, where numbers have fallen by a third in 20 years, said that he accepted non-Catholics only under exceptional circumstances. "In England I feel it is important for Catholics to be brought up in a Catholic culture," he said. "They need to understand it before facing atheism and the

multitude of religions that are around."

Father Leo Chamberlain, Head Master of Ampleforth College, where the junior school has ten more boys than last year, said: "Other Christians are seeing in Catholic schools positive things that they very much want."

He acknowledged that there had been recent closures of independent schools. "But I have no reason to suggest that Catholic schools have suffered more than others."

Dermot Gogarty, Head Master of St John's, in Windsor, said: "Over the past five years, the sector has grown in confidence and certainty about the future. The challenge that now faces us is to show some Catholic parents the dangers of being seduced purely by academic league tables in the mistaken belief that this alone will lead to a happy and successful life."

He added: "What is disappointing is that some Catholic parents are choosing non-Catholic schools, thus denying their children the opportunity of growing in a strong, committed and focused Catholic Christian community."

After-class clubs 'help to improve exam results'

By JOHN O'LEARY, EDUCATION EDITOR

EXTRA-CURRICULAR activities are as likely to boost a school's examination performance as the amount of homework pupils are set, government-sponsored research suggested yesterday.

Robin Squire, the Education Minister, announced a £600,000 programme to promote after-class initiatives in 12 schools. He said that a study at London and Keele universities provided "concrete evidence" that homework helped to improve pupils' results. But the author of the report said that activities such as music and drama, sports, and societies appeared to be equally important. A comparison of seven outstanding schools with seven considered average showed consistent differences in such "curriculum enrichment", as well as in the amount of homework set.

Professor Michael Barber, the Dean of New Initiatives at the London University Institute of Education, said that a causal relationship could not be demonstrated, but that the best schools valued both homework and extra-curricular activities. Schools did not have to choose between academic excellence and a rounded education.

Professor Barber said:

"Schools that are setting more homework are also the ones where there are higher levels of participation in extra-curricular education. In both cases, pupils are spending more time productively occupied and less time watching *Neighbours* or hanging around street corners."

Mr Squire accused Labour of "insisting" teachers by insisting that they give half an hour of homework a night in primary schools and an hour and a half for secondary pupils. He said the Government would give schools the information they needed to set their own policies. "We do not disagree with Labour on the importance of homework and out-of-school activities. Where we disagree is on the practicality of seeking to establish how much homework is carried out in every form."

Teaching union leaders backed the Government's stance. Nigel de Gruchy, of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, said: "The Government's approach will commend itself more to the profession than the dictatorial 'we know best' approach from Tony Blair."

But Labour said there was evidence that parents wanted guidelines set for homework.

THE TIMES DILLONS FORUM

Anne Frank evening

with Janet Suzman, Terry Waite and Joely Richardson

TO CELEBRATE the publication of the definitive edition of Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*, readers of *The Times* are invited to an evening of readings and discussion on Wednesday, February 5, at the Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1 at 7.30pm.

Janet Suzman, Joely Richardson and Terry Waite will read from this unabridged edition of the diary, and Buddy Elias, Anne's only surviving cousin, will discuss the enduring appeal of the diary and his memories of Anne.

There will also be excerpts from Jon Blair's Oscar-winning documentary *Anne Frank Remembered*, and an opportunity for the audience to question the panel.

Tickets for the forum at £10 (concessions for OAPs, students and the unemployed at £7.50 on production of appropriate identification), which includes £2 off the price of *The Diary of a Young Girl, Anne Frank, the Definitive Edition* (Viking, £16), are available by phoning 0171-467 1613, by faxing the coupon below, with your remittance to Dillons, 32 Gower Street, London WC1E 6EQ, where tickets can also be bought in person. A percentage of the ticket price will be donated to the Anne Frank Educational Trust.

THE TIMES/DILLONS ANNE FRANK FORUM

Please send me ticket(s) at £10 each (£7.50 concessions) for The Times/Dillons Anne Frank Forum on Wednesday, February 5, at the Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1.

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Date sent

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

Find a safe place to cross

Hedgehogs set safety example to children

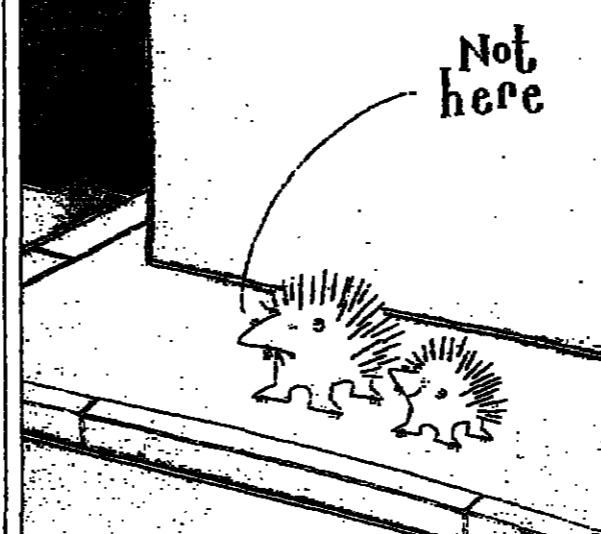
By JONATHAN PRYNN
TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

THE hedgehog, whose vulnerability to traffic is well known, yesterday became the latest animal to promote road safety to children.

Two cartoon hedgehogs lead a £500,000 five-week campaign launched by John Bowes, the Road Safety Minister. "Hedgehogs are not renowned for their road sense, and we feel this unusual approach will have great appeal to children," he said.

A 30-second cartoon depicts two hedgehogs looking for a safe place to cross. The smaller hedgehog asks: "Now?", to which the larger hedgehog replies: "Not, not now," as a car rushes past. Eventually they find a safe place and walk across. The use of animals began with Tuffy the squirrel in 1961, developed into Squawk the parrot in the early 1970s, and gave rise recently to Watchit, a dragon character.

Essex and Cheshire county councils said they would not use the campaign because its "twee" images would make no impression.



Cross where you can see what's coming
Stop Look Listen Live

The vulnerability of hedgehogs to traffic is expected to draw children's attention to their own road safety

SATURDAY

IN THE TIMES



GIRLZONE

Alan Jackson on rock's female revolution in the Magazine

FRENCH LEAVE

Four-page travel special on Britain's favourite holiday destination in Weekend

Plus

THE DIRECTORY, CAR 97, WEEKEND MONEY and 1015 for young readers

Simply the Best.

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Ban sought on unlicensed breeders

MP launches Bill to stamp out 'vile' trade in puppies

By MICHAEL HORNBY
AGRICULTURE CORRESPONDENT

DRAFT legislation to end the trade in dogs bred on unlicensed puppy farms was launched yesterday with the support of MPs from all parties and leading animal welfare and veterinary bodies.

The Kennel Club, the guardian of pedigree standards, and more than 80 local authorities are also backing the Private Member's Bill, which is due for its second reading in the Commons on Friday.

Diana Maddock, the Liberal Democrat MP for Christchurch, is the sponsor of the Breeding and Sale of Dogs Bill. She said: "We want to stamp out unlicensed premises where puppies are reared in appalling conditions. The Bill would give local authorities and the RSPCA the teeth to do something about it."

Roger Gale, chairman of the Commons all-party group on animal welfare, said the draft incorporated many of the recommendations it had put forward in a report on puppy breeding in June last year. "It is a vile trade. It is rotten," the Tory MP for North Thanet said. "Members of the public effectively support this trade by buying from shops who

should be encouraged to make more use of these."

Unlicensed puppy farms are estimated to run into the hundreds, most of them in Wales, and rear up to 70,000 animals a year. Potential profits are huge, with a single litter able to fetch £3,000 or more. Kate Parminter, head of press affairs at the RSPCA, which helped to draw up the Bill, said: "Breeders are relentlessly bred to produce puppies for sale in conditions that are often dark, cramped and filthy. It is difficult under the existing law to inspect or prosecute such premises."

Under the draft Bill, inspection by an independent vet would be required before any breeding establishment could be licensed. Any premises with two or more bitches and selling puppies from three or more litters a year would be covered. Small-time breeders would be exempt.

The Bill would also make it illegal for retailers to sell puppies obtained from unlicensed breeders, make it easier for local councils to prosecute such breeders, and provide for the introduction of strict welfare standards.

Pet shop owners would be required to keep a record of the name and address of the person from whom each dog kept for sale had been acquired and to produce the documents for vets or local authority officials. Failure to do so could lead to a fine of £500 or three months imprisonment, or both.

Under the existing law, according to the Bill's supporters, there are virtually no welfare standards for dog breeders. Local authorities also often have difficulty in proving that dogs are being bred for sale and in gaining entry to private premises to investigate possible offences.

The RSPCA said yesterday that dog buyers should always visit the breeding premises and check the conditions for themselves. Ms Parminter said: "The acid test is whether the puppy is being reared alongside its mother."

West Highland terrier puppies at a farm in Wales

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£1,000	£50
£500	£25

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Les Murray, who disliked poetry until inspired by good teaching when he was 18

Poet to spend £5,000 prize on eye operation for wife

By DALYA ALBERGE
ARTS CORRESPONDENT

THE Australian winner of the 1996 T.S. Eliot poetry prize said yesterday that he was planning to spend his £5,000 award on a laser operation to improve his wife's sight.

Les Murray, whose *Subhuman Redneck Poems* beat off competition from the Nobel winner Seamus Heaney, said that the win would enable his wife, whose salary as a teacher had long supported both of them, to have her cornea reshaped, correcting short sight.

Murray, 58, grew up on a farm and says that he loathed poetry until he was 18. He has since won every Australian poetry prize. The poet Ruth Padel, one of the Eliot prize judges, said: "His writing has a wonderful poetic electricity that runs through the words. Cleverness is never put at the service of technique but of

PERFORMANCE

*I starred last night, I shone:
I was footwork and firework in one.
a rocker that wriggled up and shot
darkness with a parasol of brilliants
and a peewee descent on a flung bit;
I was busters of glitter-bombs expanding
to mantle and aurora from a crown.
I was foyettes, falls of blazing paint,
paraflores spot-welding cloudy heaven,
loose gold off fierce toeholds of white,
a finale red-tongued as *haka* leap:
that too was a bunt of all right!*

*As usual after any triumph, I was
of course inconsolable.**From *Subhuman Redneck Poems* (Carcanet Press)*

feeling." He had long deserved to be better known in this country, she added.

The poet, who did not attend the London prize-giving, said from his home in New South Wales that it was "nice to win" but felt it was sad that competitions threw up "a whole lot of losers ... it's a pity we have to eat each other for our sustenance." He had refused to go to the ceremony unless he was told who had won, but the organisers refused. "A writer shouldn't have to eat his fingernails while watching to see who'll be humiliated."

He recalled his early dislike of poetry: "It was a school subject and I was deeply suspicious of it. But at 18, I was completely converted by two good teachers. It was

'Insensitive' Dunblane massacre survey withdrawn

By GILLIAN BOWDITCH
SCOTLAND CORRESPONDENT

ACADEMICS have caused outrage in Dunblane by sending questionnaires to people in an attempt to study the effect on the community of the murders of 16 schoolchildren and their teacher last March.

Public health and Stirling council officials have said the research was insensitive and inappropriate after a relative of one of the victims received a questionnaire and complained to the council's support centre in Dunblane.

Five hundred questionnaires were sent earlier this month, half to Dunblane residents and the rest to people in nearby Stirling. The addresses were picked at random from the telephone book. They arrived with a cover note from Dr Man Cheung Chung, of Wolverhampton University, and Dr Peter Nolan, of Birmingham University, asking for them to be completed and returned by next Friday.

The questionnaire had multiple choice questions asking residents how often they thought about the massacre and if they feared for their safety. The researchers did not contact Forth Valley Health Board or Stirling council, and the study was not submitted to the health board's ethics committee.

Dr Mick North, a reader in biochemistry at Stirling University whose daughter Sophie, 5, died in the massacre, said: "It does seem particularly insensitive to send questionnaires directly to people."

Neither Dr Chung nor Dr Nolan was available for comment yesterday. Wolverhampton University said: "Both researchers are very upset about the distress they have caused. Both have track records in the area of post-traumatic stress disorder. In this instance they were naive and it has been a learning experience for them."

A letter of apology has been sent to recipients of the questionnaire. John White, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Wolverhampton University, said: "We very deeply regret any distress this letter may have caused. With hindsight, the researchers acknowledge that their initial methods of approach could have been more sensitive and the university decided last week to withdraw the project."

Professor Maxwell Irvine, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of Birmingham University, said: "I deeply regret the distress which has been caused to the people" of Dunblane. The letter is insensitive and reveals a lack of sound judgment. It was not seen by any member of this university."

Tax rebel sentenced to 21 days in prison

A 69-year-old man has been sentenced to 21 days' imprisonment after repeatedly refusing to pay almost £7,000 in outstanding tax to the Inland Revenue. Roger Franklin, of Horsham, Gloucestershire, who is protesting at arms spending, ignored county court summonses.

Franklin was given a 28-day sentence in 1995 over unpaid capital gains tax on investment income. He served 12 days before the tax demand was waived. The Revenue then took further legal action to recover the rest of his debt.

Drink-drive PC

A police officer who crashed his car into a wall while three times over the drink-drive limit was jailed for six weeks. PC Kevin Coombes, 30, of Ward End, Birmingham, who served with West Midlands Police, had been at a Christmas party at a police station.

Solicitor arrested

A solicitor has been arrested in Thailand for alleged fraud involving £18 million in mortgage funds. Robert Afton, 46, from Luton, fled Britain in 1992 after a fraud squad inquiry into his conveyancing work. British police are seeking his extradition.

Strip club halted

The club owner, Peter Stringfellow, has withdrawn an application to open a "lap dancing" club in Manchester, blaming market forces. The proposal, for the site of the former Millionaire Club, had been opposed by women's groups.

Fatal flea drops

Twenty cats and a dog may have been killed by a toxic batch of flea drops. Virbac has recalled batches 21 to 42 of its Dronix Cat solution and batches 17 to 27 of Dronix Dog. Jean Baker, 46, of Southampton, said her cat, Alice, died hours after she applied it.

Cold feet

Robert Garside, who is attempting to run round the world by 2000, arrived in Vienna yesterday "a bit late" because of the extreme cold in France. Mr Garside, 30, left London on December 7 and expects to return on New Year's Eve, 1999.

Red card for ref

A football referee has been banned for 28 days after admitting bringing the game into disrepute by swearing at a player. John Coleman, 33, of Portsmouth, swore at a Colchester Common defender who disputed a throw-in during a Hampshire Cup match.

THE BIGGEST MEDICAL COMPLAINT FOR PEOPLE OVER 50 IS

HOSPITAL WAITING LISTS

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The surgery entails a powerful plastic lens being inserted into each eye, so that it replaces the natural lens and corrects the vision. The operations were performed by Emanuel Rosen at the private Centre for Advanced Refractive Eye Surgery, at Alexandra Hospital in Cheadle, Greater Manchester, last month. "This is the first time I have operated on a husband and wife for the same problem on the same day. The results have

*Subject to policy conditions. **Subject to some out-patient treatments.

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Tax rebel sentenced to 21 days in prison

Drink-driver

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Strip club bar

Final Grade

Final Test

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APPENDIX

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with the rest of
the world.

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Major tells 'abusive' Blair to look in the mirror

By PHILIP WEBSTER, POLITICAL EDITOR

JOHN MAJOR set the scene for a bitter personal election campaign against Tony Blair yesterday by deriding his claim to be a stronger leader. He told Mr Blair to "look in the mirror" before making accusations of weak leadership.

Alleging that Mr Blair was copying his policies and indulging in the "politics of insults", Mr Major declared that he "was raring to go" for an election campaign that he again indicated was likely to end on May 1.

Mr Major, returning from a six-day tour of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, eagerly sought to take the initiative with some of his most contemptuous remarks about Mr Blair and Labour and their alleged failure to spell out policies.

He challenged Mr Blair and Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor, over the proposed windfall tax on privatised utilities, telling them to publish the advice on which they claimed it was not illegal. He said they continued to postpone giving details of their tax plans, and how the centrepiece of the windfall tax — "a wonderful golden money tree that hangs at the bottom of a

prospective Labour Chancellor's garden" — might be illegal.

"This is just farcical and ludicrous," he said. "They are not ready to face an election campaign."

Mr Major gave a press conference during his flight home to set out the main themes of his election attack on Labour. He also hardened his position for the European inter-governmental conference, having suggested on Sunday that his vision of a flexible Europe was the only way forward and that he would veto any alternative favoured by the federalists and centralisers.

In an ITN interview earlier Mr Major confirmed previous clear indications that he favoured calling the election for May 1. "I am prepared to go long, yes, of course I am prepared to play it long," he said.

There was "every good reason" for allowing the current Parliament to flow a little longer because he wanted to get through the education and law and order reforms and the tax cuts announced in the Budget.

But his message was that he was relishing the fight ahead

and it appears that he is hoping that he can avoid a Commons defeat on a key issue to keep the campaign going as long as possible. Strategists say that he will regard the launch of the Wirral South by-election campaign shortly as the start of electioneering proper, hoping that he will get through the three-month campaign.

Told reporters: "We are getting close to an election. I like elections. I am raring to go when we get back to the domestic scene."

Mr Major has been clearly stung by Mr Blair's attack on his leadership. Mr Blair, he said, did not want to talk about policies so he had gone for the politics of insults. Yet after accusing him of weakness over Europe, Mr Blair had adopted exactly the same position as he had over the single currency.

"Perhaps he should look in the mirror before he advances charges like that. When they do not want to talk about policy they wheel out Tony Blair, John Prescott and Brian Wilson to abuse. That will not wash with the electorate."

Mr Major is so far behind in the polls that many in his party speak privately of hoping only to limit the scale of the defeat. But on his popular sub-continent, which has produced the prospect of substantial fresh orders for British business, he has behaved anything but like a man thinking of failure.

This past week it has been the old relaxed Mr Major on view. The newspapers have not been his favourite friends in recent Euro-troubled times, and press relations on overseas trips have sometimes been cool. He has never been less than courteous. But this time a charm offensive has been evident.

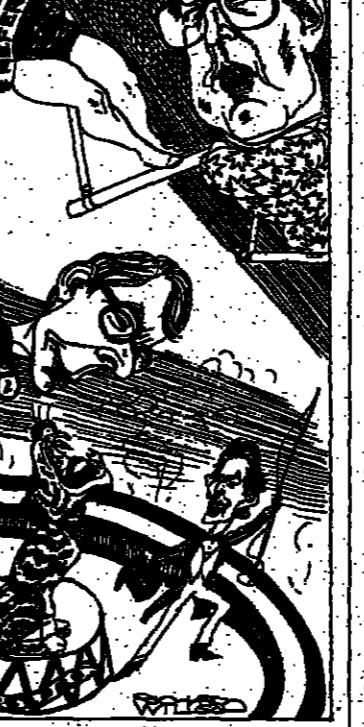
During the two-stage trip from Dhaka to Islamabad, via Delhi, last Sunday he spent most of the first flight chatting to every member of the press corps then gave an on-the-record news conference before landing in Pakistan. He has been in a very good mood.

"Perhaps he should look in the mirror before he advances charges like that. When they do not want to talk about policy they wheel out Tony Blair, John Prescott and Brian Wilson to abuse. That will not wash with the electorate."

On the Khyber he was clearly tickled by the story of how the Afghan freedom fighters had rolled a group of Russian invaders down a hill. When it was suggested that that might be the answer for some of his troublesome back-

benchers, he smiled and declared: "Now, now!"

Mr Major's apparent contentment probably springs from his being into the home straight. One way or another his years of turmoil may be



coming to an end. If he wins against all the odds, he will be the greatest Tony Houdini of all time and his position immeasurably strengthened; if he loses he will be off, probably quite quickly.

Trivial tax game is no way to pursue progress

THE pre-election debate about tax is woefully inadequate. It focuses almost entirely on the basic and higher rates of income tax and tendentious arguments about the share of income that people pay in tax. Labour is so defensive, and the Tories so one-sided, that the real options are not discussed.

The key influences are not small variations in marginal rates of income tax but the state of the economy and the level of public spending. The Government has had more success in reducing the relative size of the public sector than its right-wing critics concede. Nevertheless, as the Treasury committee accepts yesterday in its report on the 1996 Budget, "getting public expenditure below 40 per cent and holding it there for a period of years has been achieved on very few occasions in the past 30 years".

The committee asks whether the Government's objective is achievable in the short to medium term without a more thoroughgoing and wholesale reappraisal of the role of the state and the extent to which it can or should provide various services". But neither of the main parties is willing to discuss the implications and the Liberal Democrats' answer of 1p on income tax for schools only skirts the issue.

Since income tax accounts for only a quarter of Government revenue, what matters is the overall tax structure. In the Thatcher years, Geoffrey Howe and Nigel Lawson did much to reform the tax system, shifting from direct to indirect tax and simplifying both income and corporation tax. Norman Lamont and Kenneth Clarke have been more concerned with re-establishing control over public finances. Their main innovations have been the new system of spending control and greater openness in monetary policy.

By temperament, Mr Clarke has been less interested in tax reform or simplification. Instead, he has reversed some of the Lawson legacy, not only by introducing new taxes but also by making the system more complicated with more rates of tax. The phasing out of mortgage tax relief and the married

man's allowance initiated by Mr Lamont has been halted. Indeed there has been a campaign, backed by Tory populists and their press allies, to rebuild these tax reliefs in the name of family values and the homebuyer. At the same time, the controversy over the extension of VAT to domestic fuel has discouraged both parties from considering any further expansion of the VAT base.

The present position is unsatisfactory. The tax system has become more, not less, complicated during the 1990s, while the tax base has been squeezed, leading to the recent shortfall in tax receipts which pushed up public borrowing. Any new government should consider a programme of tax reform involving a simplification of income tax, balancing a single or at most two rates, with the elimination of the 30 current forms of relief; an extension of VAT to all forms of consumption, with essentials taxed at 8 per cent; and a cut in tax on savings.

The case for such changes was recently put by Nigel Forman, one of the most thoughtful Tory backbenchers, in a recent *Demos* pamphlet, *Single Rate Tax: The Path to Real Simplicity*. He argues that these changes would benefit most taxpayers, stimulate growth, reduce avoidance, make the tax system more buoyant and remove many of the present distortions.

That, as Mr Forman admits, would "require real political courage from the Chancellor who embarked upon it". Instead, both main parties are now busily limiting their future freedom of manoeuvre. There are obvious electoral reasons why Labour claims that nothing in its plans implies an increase in personal taxation. But Gordon Brown may regret the day he ruled out any extension of VAT. Demanding every detail of tax rates is a trivial and dishonest game, compared with the real issues of tax and public spending.

PETER RIDDELL

Gummer attacks 'hypocrites'

By NICK NUTTALL

INTERNATIONAL efforts to protect the environment are degenerating into a shambles because of penny-pinching by nations including Canada, America and France, John Gummer claimed yesterday.

The Environment Secretary accused several countries of robbing the United Nations

Environment Programme of the political and financial clout needed to succeed. He said their latest actions had severely damaged the worldwide campaign to prevent pollution from harming fish stocks and wildlife.

Mr Gummer, speaking at a Foreign Office meeting on the oceans, said: "Britain is punching well above its

weight in what we spend but many of our neighbours in Europe and North America have reduced what they spend." He said Canada was especially hypocritical for cutting its contributions by two thirds. "This is despite there being no country in the world that witters on about the environment so internationally and so perpetually."

The peers are keen to alter the Firearms (Amendment) Bill to minimise the damaging impact they believe it will have on shooting enthusiasts.

Peers ready to fight gun curbs

By JAMES LANDALE

PRO-SHOOTING members of the Lords will tomorrow try to force radical changes to the Government's new gun control laws.

The peers are keen to alter the Firearms (Amendment) Bill to minimise the damaging impact they believe it will have on shooting enthusiasts.

Whitehall and Lords sources said that they were relaxed and expected the Government to make few concessions.

One of the demands is for greater compensation, which at present is to be available, only to gun owners who are forced to hand in weapons. Lord Swansea has tabled an amendment that would provide compensation for the owners of shooting clubs that go out of business, including cover for liabilities such as mortgages and leases. This could raise the Government's compensation bill from £150 million to almost £1 billion.

The peers also want to scrap plans for stringent new security controls on gun clubs. Instead, Lord Swansea has tabled an amendment allowing gun owners to disassemble their weapons so that one part is kept at home and the rest at a shooting club. This would cut security costs that would otherwise put many clubs out of business.

Another amendment would exempt the national pistol shooting squad from the ban on storing handguns at home.

IN PARLIAMENT

TODAY in the Commons: Budget speech debate. From 2.30pm: Foreign Office questions; Crime and Punishment (Scotland) Bill, remaining stages; debate on contents of the Lord's Budget Bill; Sundays (Dancing and Licensing) Bill, second reading.

Talks on ministerial code

ALL-PARTY talks are to begin at Westminster today to agree the wording of a new code binding MPs and ministers to be frank and open with Parliament (Valerie Elliott writes).

The aim is to prepare a motion as swiftly as possible before the general election. MPs would then vote on it early in the new Parliament so that the code could take effect immediately. MPs on the Pub-

lic Service Committee suggested the code after the armchair inquiry revealed that some ministers had misinformed Parliament. The Government accepted the suggestion, senior ministers believing that it would clarify their responsibility to Parliament and ensure that MPs were given full and accurate information unless national security demanded otherwise.

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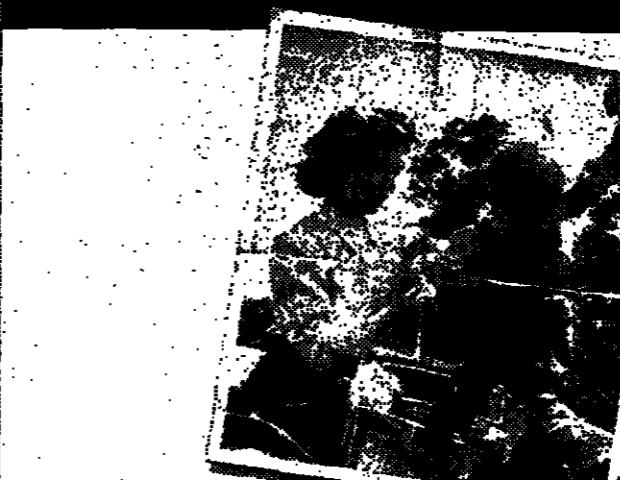
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TRUST

Poll commissioners award Belgrade to opposition

FROM ANTHONY LOVY IN BELGRADE

EMBATTLED in a power struggle within his own Socialist Government in Serbia, President Milosevic's crumbling fortunes appeared further threatened yesterday when a Belgrade electoral commission recognised the opposition coalition parties had won control of the capital's vital city assembly in November's poll.

Hours later, in a second announcement, the commission also fully restored an opposition victory in Serbia's second largest city, Niš.

However, its sudden moves were met with suspicion by coalition leaders who questioned its authority, labelled the decisions a ploy and vowed to continue the mass protests that have gripped Serbia since Mr Milosevic's rescinding of local election results eight weeks ago.

"The Socialists have given us a new year's present we don't believe in," said Zoran Djindjic, leader of the Democratic Party and a principal force among the Zajedno coalition triumvirate. "We want full acceptance of all the original election results. Until then there will be no trade."

Vuk Draskovic, leader of the coalition, appeared equally wary. He asked: "Is this a real decision? or a new trick to ambush the Serbian people and international community."

and buy Milosevic the time he needs? We must wait and see how the Socialists react to this before we can believe in it."

Either way, the commission qualified its latest announcement by saying the "preliminary" decision could be challenged by the Socialists.

President Milosevic is renowned for his "cat and mouse" skills. There is real concern among the opposition that this latest announcement is an attempt by him to dupe most protesters into leaving the streets before he smashes the remnants with force.

However, there is no doubt that the President is being forced to feel the political wind of change. The demonstration-camp on Monday night, the Orthodox Christian New Year's Eve, in central Belgrade was attended by perhaps half a million people. The wildest rally yet, with scenes of defiant revelry, were broadcast globally.

Those results bring control of the capital's powerful city assembly, which presides over 20 per cent of Serbia's population and crucial media and legal bodies. Yesterday, the commission's decision awarded 60 seats to the opposition coalition and 23 to the incumbent Socialist bloc among the 110 seats contested. Mr Lazarovic said that the commission would come to a decision about ten other seats within three days.

However, there was good reason to doubt the Government's apparent climbdown. Belgrade's election commission had its power to recognise the results annulled in November when President Milosevic decided that judges

Leading article, page 17

Bulgarian leader makes election vow to placate protesters

FROM RICHARD OWEN
IN SOFIA

A POSSIBLE compromise began to emerge in the Bulgarian crisis yesterday as Petar Stoyanov, who takes over as President on Sunday, said he intended to appoint a Socialist Prime Minister as an interim measure and call early elections for June or October.

A presidential adviser appeared on television to say that "consultations on a way out can now begin". But as the ruling Socialists began negotiations with the opposition, which has been buoyed up by

more than a week of huge street protests, Ivan Kostov, the opposition's leader, said he still wanted the Socialists to give up power immediately.

The Socialists said that they accepted "in principle" the idea of early elections in the context of the implementation of a national anti-crisis programme. Mr Kostov said this was meaningless because any interim government would need "broad social support".

Some analysts have arisen with living standards in steep decline. Inflation is more than 300 per cent and the foreign debt \$10 billion (£6 billion).

The outgoing President, Zhelev, said there would be a further "explosion" if the Socialists were given an "unconditional mandate" by his successor. "Bulgaria is the first post-communist country to fail the transition to a market economy, and it is in danger of becoming the first to fail the transition to democracy as well," Mr Zhelev said.

Mr Stoyanov, a dapper conservative lawyer elected in November, said he understood the strength of feeling which had brought tens of thousands of impoverished Bulgarians on to the streets for

the past nine days. Millions of factory workers went on strike yesterday to support the protest against the Socialists (the former Communists, who were elected in 1994 for a four-year term but have presided over a catastrophic descent towards bankruptcy).

Mr Stoyanov visited a hospital where demonstrators injured in last weekend's clashes in and around parliament had been taken. After handing out oranges from a plastic bag, he said he intended to appoint Nikolai Dobrev, the Socialist Interior Minister, as Prime Minister in succession to Zhan

Vadenov, who resigned last month. Mr Stoyanov said a Dobrev government could then negotiate a reform package with the International Monetary Fund to stabilise the currency, the lev, which has become almost worthless.

Mr Dobrev said he was prepared to negotiate a "currency board" involving a fixed exchange rate and to limit the Government's powers in order to stabilise the lev.

There was no let-up in the protest yesterday. In Sofia, demonstrators chanted "Elections now" and "Red mafia out".



A demonstrator in front of Sofia's parliament yesterday

MPs start moves to impeach Yeltsin

FROM RICHARD BEESTON
IN MOSCOW

RUSSIA'S Communist-dominated parliament yesterday began impeachment proceedings against the ailing President Yeltsin, claiming that he can no longer perform his duties.

Viktor Ilyukhin, the head of the parliamentary security committee, who drew up the draft Bill put before the Duma (lower house), said that Mr Yeltsin would be dismissed if it were enacted. The Bill, which may be debated on Friday, calls on members to "regard the powers of the President as prematurely terminated due to his consistent incapacity to perform his duties for health reasons".

There was no indication last night that the Bill was any more likely to succeed than two similar Bills launched last year, not least because of the ambiguities of Russian law. Gennadi Seleznyov, the Communist Speaker of parliament, said he doubted that the Bill would survive its first reading because the constitution was "very hazy" on the subject of removing the head of state.

Mr Yeltsin was said last night to be feeling much better, with his temperature and blood pressure back to normal. "His condition has improved considerably, he is more physically active," the presidential press service said after doctors examined the President at the Central Clinical Hospital in Moscow, where he met Anatoli Chubais, the Kremlin Chief of Staff, for 40 minutes.



General Lebed and his wife at Moscow airport yesterday

Lebed lays siege to Bonn leadership

By ROGER BOYES

ALEKSANDR LEBED, one of the most serious challengers to succeed the ailing President Yeltsin, yesterday embarked on a three-day whirlwind courtship of the Germans, setting out his credentials as a *kezailia* leader.

On the eve of talks with politicians, industrialists and bankers, the outspoken General Lebed, 46, predicted the rapid decline and ousting of Mr Yeltsin, who has a good friendship with Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor. He said it was time for the Germans to realise the folly of putting all their bets on Mr Yeltsin — in two months at the latest even the greatest optimists would recognise the incapacity of the President to carry out his duties.

In Bavaria, he will meet Edmund Stoiber, the regional Prime Minister, whose Christian Social Union, the CDU's sister party, has shown some interest in General Lebed's fledgling Russian Republic People's Party.

To persuade the Germans of his goodwill, General Lebed is presenting a rather moderate view on Nato's eastward enlargement. He understood, he told the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, that Nato was not preparing an offensive alliance.

Swiss bank gets rid of Nazi-era records

FROM PETER CAPELLA
IN ZURICH

ZURICH police are investigating why historical records from Switzerland's largest bank were thrown away by a bank historian, despite a ban on the destruction of documents that might disclose details about financial transactions with Nazi Germany.

The Union Bank of Switzerland agreed yesterday there was a clear case of negligence when the files, some dating back to 1863, were sent to be shredded. A security guard at the bank's Zurich headquarters found them in the shredding room last week and handed the papers to a local Jewish organisation, which told the public prosecutor's office last Friday. The bank said it regretted the "mistake".

Christoph Meili, the guard, said last night that he had been suspended by the security firm that employed him.

He added that he was unable to recover all the documents he had seen, but some related to business dealings with Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. A lawyer for Zurich's Jewish Community said he could be prosecuted under banking secrecy laws.

Gertrud Erismann, for the bank, said an internal inquiry found that the papers had nothing to do with dormant Jewish "Holocaust accounts".

■ Berne: The Swiss Government said yesterday that it would give Poland a list of 53 Polish Holocaust victims whose Swiss bank accounts were declared owners after the Second World War and handed to Warsaw. (Reuters)

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27,500	154.01	168.74	205.95	325.54
15,000	102.67	113.16	137.30	217.03
9,000	97.97	106.98	128.19	199.38
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5,000	54.43	59.43	71.22	110.77

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• WITH PAYMENT PROTECTION



"The attempt to portray prisons as holiday camps is not borne out by my experience," says Douglas Hurd

I am not afraid of being called liberal

So. Douglas Hurd is to become the chairman of the Prison Reform Trust. Even the man who asked him to do the job, Stephen Shaw, the PRT's director, admits it is a "remarkable decision". I have been dispatched to the ninth floor of the NatWest building in the City to ask Mr Hurd why he made it.

As the express lift whooshes me on my way, I review the subject of the interview: the PRT is a small liberal pressure group which campaigns for fewer people to be sent to prison and for better, more enlightened treatment of those who are there. Douglas Hurd is a former Tory Home Secretary and, until the forthcoming election, a Conservative MP. As Home Secretary, 1985-89, he set in train the 1991 Criminal Justice Act, the aim of which was to find ways of punishing less serious offenders without putting them in prison. The present Tory Home Secretary, Michael Howard, is in favour of putting more people in prison. He, famously, thinks that "prison works".

The lift bears me into a plush foyer. Mr Hurd, I am told, is making a couple of calls. I sit and wait and continue my revision. Under Mr Howard's latest proposals for mandatory terms for repeat offenders — the Crimes (Sentences) Bill, currently proceeding through Parliament — the prison population is expected to increase from 88,500 to some 73,000 over the next 15 years. During the debate on the second reading of the Bill, Mr Hurd — along with several other notable Tories — warned the House of the effect of this increase on the possibility of effective rehabilitation. He said: "It is possible that our prisons will turn out more accomplished criminals, and that the purpose of the Bill will, in the medium and long term, be frustrated."

And now we meet, and I shake one of what were always reputed to be the safest hands in British government. The hand extends from the sleeve of a formal suit worn with a more expressive tie than it might have been during Mr Hurd's ten years as first Home then Foreign Secretary. Mr Hurd has a long body topped off with a long, narrow head, made even longer by his white quiff. We stand awkwardly at the window. After a bit of chat about the view we get down to business.

Mr Hurd will take over as chairman of the trust in November. The retiring chairman is Jon Snow,

Former Home Secretary Douglas Hurd wants to reform prison. Interview by Robert Crampton

the newsreader. Was Mr Hurd asked to succeed him? "I was rather, yes. I was rather. But the PRT is all-party. Conservatives were among those who urged me most strongly to accept. It is not a body that is in confrontation with the Home Office or the Prison Service."

He chooses his words carefully.

The PRT is certainly not in confrontation with either the prison governors or the civil servants at the Home Office. The Home Secretary,

he is another matter. Jon Snow, in his report for 1995-96, says this: "PRT may fundamentally disagree with the Home Secretary's assertion that 'Prison Works'." I say to Mr Hurd: "The PRT may be all-party, but if you look at its trustees — Sir Louis Blom-Cooper, QC, Edward Fitzgerald, QC, Silvia Casale, Trevor Phillips — it is obviously a liberalish body, isn't it?" "With a small I, yes, with a small I," he says. "But it is a broad church. I have my own views. It's not as if the PRT has a three-line whip."

I can't remember a Prime Minister going near a prison'

works" or not. He thinks that prisons have improved substantially since he was in charge of them — no more slopping out, no more three in a cell, no more prisoners held in police stations. I ask him if he was routinely shocked, visiting prisons ten years ago. "No, I wasn't." I ask him what emotional impact they had as places that have now drawn him back. "I think 60,000 people is a lot of people ... It's a neglected problem, a forgotten subject. I've worked with three

Prime Ministers quite closely. I can't remember a Prime Minister ever going near a prison.

The Princess Royal does, or has done. I don't know that other royals do."

We talk more about the Crime (Sentences) Bill, which the Government is desperate to pass before the dissolution. I say that it is a

strange state of affairs when Douglas Hurd

and Kenneth Baker form the

opposition to a government measure.

"Well, I did point this out," he says. "There ought to be a discussion about these things ... I'm not afraid of being called a liberal with a small I on these matters. I've always been against capital punishment. The attempt to portray prisons as holiday camps is not borne out by my experience. Some one commits suicide in prison once every five days. That's a funny sort of holiday camp."

That is quite animated for Mr Hurd. Encouraged, I have another go at getting him to have a go at Michael Howard. I point out that he was a Home Secretary who wanted numbers reduced. Mr Howard wants them increased, even at an estimated cost of £3 billion for 12 new prisons. "Yes and he's entitled to, every Home Secretary is right to be discontented with what he finds, because crime and the fear of crime is such an evil. He has to have regard to numbers. Michael Howard believes — and I expect he's right — that he can manage. I had an actual crisis of numbers. He has a more manage-

able problem and therefore he can take these measures in a way which simply wasn't open." But you wouldn't have approved of filling the prisons even if they hadn't already been full? "I'm not sure about that because, you know, life's moved on since '87-'88."

Will you be voting for the Crime (Sentences) Bill? I voted for the second reading. "What about when it comes back for its final reading?" He says: "I think, er, er, er, I expect so, but I think the Home Secretary always needs to listen carefully to points made. I'm weighing my words because it hasn't got to the Lords yet. Obviously there will be points made in the Lords which he will need to listen to. What points?"

"I don't know yet." Have you ever voted against the Government? "No, I have not." It would be a difficult thing for you to do? "Of course it would and at the moment I have no intention of doing so but I did say on second reading it will need careful scrutiny." What if the Bill comes back unanswered? "I don't know the answer to that."

We talk about the Dutch auction taking place between the political parties on crime policy. Mr Hurd is at his most imperious: "I've never thought that criminal justice measures which were simply as a result of a calculation about votes were likely to be very effective. I don't know what they're doing. I've not discussed it with [Jack] Straw. I think it would be a great mistake if what happens in prisons gets left out simply because it's distasteful. I don't think that I'm a sofie on crime. I'm now in a position when I don't have to worry if the vindictive tendency in some newspapers [and some members of his own party] take it out on me. I don't have to worry about that anymore."

MEDIA

• **W**hat's really painful is not being covered by my health insurance

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ISRAEL

In the third extract from Anne Frank's unexpurgated diary, she describes problems with her mother

A daughter's growing pains

SUNDAY, JULY 12, 1942

They were all so nice to me a month ago because of my birthday, and yet every day I feel myself drifting further away from Mother and Margot. I worked hard today and they praised me only to start picking on me again five minutes later.

I don't fit in with them, and I've felt that clearly in the last few weeks. They're always saying how nice it is with the *four of us*, and that we get along so well, without giving a moment's thought to the fact that I don't feel that way.

COMMENT ADDED BY ANNE IN SEPTEMBER 1942

Daddy's always so nice. He understands me perfectly, and I wish we could have a heart-to-heart talk sometime without my bursting instantly into tears. But apparently that has to do with my age.

FRIDAY

AUGUST 21, 1942

Mummy gave me another one of her dreadful sermons this morning. We take the opposite view on everything. Daddy's a sweetheart; he may get cross with me, but it never lasts longer than five minutes.

THURSDAY

OCTOBER 1, 1942

I have a terrible pain in my index finger (on my left hand), so I can't do any ironing. What luck!

Mr van Daan wants me to sit next to him at the table, since Margot doesn't eat enough to suit him. That's all right with me, I welcome the change. Now Margot will have to bear the brunt of Mummy's carpings. Or rather, won't, since Mother doesn't make such sarcastic remarks to her. Not to that paragon of virtue! I'm always teasing Margot about being a paragon of virtue these days, and she hates it. Maybe it'll teach her not to be such a goody-goody. High time she learnt.

To end this hedgehog of news, a particularly amusing joke told by Mr van Daan. What goes click 99 times and clack once? A centipede with a club foot.

SATURDAY

OCTOBER 3, 1942

Everybody teased me quite a bit yesterday because I lay down on the bed next to Mr van Daan. "At your age! Shocking!" and other remarks along those lines. Silly, of course. I'd never want to sleep with Mr van Daan the way they mean.

Yesterday Mother and I had another run-in and she really kicked up a fuss. She told Daddy all my sins and started to cry, which made me cry, too, and I already had such an awful headache. I finally told



Anne Frank, left, posing with her father, whom she adored, and elder sister Margot, whom she later resented. Anne, above, in the photograph she liked best, showing her as a glamorous young lady.

Daddy that I love him more than I do Mother, to which he replied that it was just a passing phase, but I don't think so. I simply can't stand Mother, and I have to force myself not to snap at her all the time, and to stay calm, when I'd rather snap her across the face. I don't know why I've taken such a terrible dislike to her. Daddy says that if Mother isn't feeling well or has a headache, I should volunteer to help her, but I'm not going to because I don't love her and don't enjoy doing it. I can imagine Mother dying some day, but Daddy's death would be inconceivable. It's very mean of me, but that's how I feel. I hope Mother will never read this or anything else I've written.

I've been allowed to read more grown-up books lately. *Eva's Youth* by Nico van Sodtelen is currently keeping me busy. I don't think there's much of a difference between this and the books for teenage girls. Eva thought that children grew on trees, like apples, and that the stork plucked them off the tree when they were ripe and

brought them to the mothers. But her girlfriend's cat had kittens and Eva saw them coming out of the cat, so she thought cats laid eggs and hatched them like chickens, and that mothers who wanted a child also went upstairs a few days before their time to lay an egg and brood on it. After the babies arrived, the mothers were pretty weak from all that squatting. At some point, Eva wanted a baby, too. She took a woollen scarf and spread it on the ground so the egg could fall into it, and then she squatted down and began to push. She clucked as she waited, but no egg came out. Finally, after she'd been sitting for a long time, something did come, but it was a sausage instead of an egg. Eva was embarrassed. She thought she was ill. Funny, isn't it? There are also parts of *Eva's Youth* that talk about women selling their bodies on the street and asking loads of money. I'd be mortified in front of a man like that. In addition, it mentions Eva's menstruation. Oh, I long to have my period — then I'll really be grown up.

Daddy is grumbling again and threatening to take away my diary. Oh, horror of horrors! From now on I'm going to hide it.

MONDAY NOVEMBER 2, 1942

I had an awful headache yesterday and went to bed early. Margot's being exasperating again.

PS: I forgot to mention the important news that I'm probably going to have my period soon. I can tell because I keep finding a whitish smear in my panties, and Mother predicted it would start soon. I can hardly wait. It's such a momentous event. Too bad I can't use sanitary towels, but you can't get them any more, and Mummy's tampons can be used only by women who've had a baby.

He doesn't realise that he treats Margot differently from me. Margot just happens to be the cleverest, the kindest, the prettiest and the best. But I have a right to be taken seriously, too. I've always been the clown and mischief-maker of the family; I've always had to pay double for my sins: once with scoldings and then again with my own sense of despair.

I'm no longer satisfied with the meaningless affection or the supposedly serious talks. I long for something from Father that he's incapable of giving. I'm not envious of her brains or her beauty. It's just that I'd like to feel that Father really loves me, not because I'm his child, but because I'm me.

I cling to Father because my contempt of Mother is growing daily and it's only through him that I am able to retain the last ounce of family feeling I have left.

I tell myself time and again to overlook Mother's bad example. I only want to see her good points, and to look inside myself for what's lacking in her. But it doesn't work, and the worst part is that Father and Mother don't realise their own inadequacies.

The whole time I've been here I've longed unconsciously — and at times consciously — for trust, love and physical affection. This longing may change in intensity, but it's always there.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 1943

I'm seething with rage, yet I can't show it. I'd like to scream, stamp my foot, give Mother a good shaking, cry and I don't know what else because of the nasty words, mocking looks and accusations that she hurls at me day after day, piercing me like

Dit is een foto, zoals ik me zou wensen, altijd zo te zijn. Dan had ik nog wel een kans om naar Hollywood te komen.

Anne Frank
10 Oct. 1942

(translation)

"This is a photo as I would wish myself to look all the time. Then I would maybe have a chance to come to Hollywood."

Anne Frank, 10 Oct. 1942



HULTON GETTY

lying around again. You never put that away either!"

I said I hadn't used it, and Margot backed me up, since she was the guilty party.

Mother went on talking about how messy I was until I got fed up and said, rather curtly: "I wasn't even the one who said you were careless. I'm always getting blamed for other people's mistakes!"

Mother fell silent, and less than a minute later I was obliged to kiss her goodnight. This incident may not have been very important, but these days everything gets on my nerves.

Last night there was another scene with Mother. Margot was tucking her woollen blanket around her when suddenly she leapt out of bed and carefully examined the blanket. What do you think she found? A pin! Mother had patched the blanket and forgotten to take it out. Father shook his head meaningfully and made a comment about how careless Mother is. Soon afterwards Mother came in from the bathroom, and just to tease her I said: "Du bist doch eine echte Rabenmutter."

Of course, she asked me why I'd said that, and we told her about the pin she'd overlooked. She immediately assumed her haughtiest expression and said: "You're a fine one to talk. When you're sewing, the entire floor is covered with pins. And look, you've left the manicure set

TOMORROW

Mr Dussel, a dentist, joins the Franks in hiding with dismal news from outside

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A strong line on spring



Feminine frills and bold stripes are the catwalk directions to follow this summer, says Style Editor Grace Bradberry

The wise fashion shopper will already be thinking about what to buy for this spring. After one of the coldest winter spells on record, this may seem foolish, but in fact it will be only a matter of days before the new season's collections begin appearing on shop rails. It's often easier to make an early decision as high fashion stores often sell out of desirable items quickly. There's nothing worse than finding half a suit, or the perfect sweater in the wrong colour.

Over the past few years, the catwalk influence on high street fashion has grown increasingly strong. This season is no different. So even if you won't be spending £500 on a top, it helps to know what's going on.

Paradoxically, it has rarely been more difficult to divine the future of fashion from the bi-annual fashion shows. Hemlines no longer rise and fall together, and the stylists who put the catwalk look together are concerned increasingly with creating headlines rather than wearable outfits. As a result,

some of the "looks" that emerge are fads rather than genuine fashions. Others, although intended to be taken seriously, were surely designed in Hades.

Into this last category comes diaphanous — see-through to the rest of us — which was the big story from the spring-summer shows. Mindful no doubt of the old Dorothy Perkins slogan — "we've lined it so you'll like it" — many of the designers thoughtfully added a petticoat before sending the dresses over to England. Those with patterns are preferable, as they distract attention from the lumps and bumps that are all too visible when you're effectively wearing a nightie.

In response to the confusing mix of styles, the women who buy high fashion have begun focusing on a few cult items from specific designers. Likely contenders for summer include Prada's colonial shirt with military-style pockets and deep collar, Gucci's skimpy crochet top and Dolce & Gabbana's diamond-holed crocheted cardie.

Other outfits that are likely to



attract plenty of magazine coverage, but are less likely to find their way into people's wardrobes, include John Galliano's floral print slip-dresses, Dolce & Gabbana's floral print coats, and Blumarine's striped off-the-shoulder top.

For those of us who won't be spending several hundred pounds on a cardigan this summer, these images will do one important

thing: define the season's mood. More accurately, there are several different moods, although two particular directions are making the strongest impact. One is towards eccentric femininity — plenty of frills and flowers, but with a bit of attitude thrown in. The other is towards strong lines — stripes, asymmetrical necklines, vertiginous V-necks, handkerchief hems.

Of the two, British women will feel safest with the harsh symmetries. By and large we recoil from anything overtly feminine and ruffled, and the danger with fru-fru is that it can turn all but androgynous six-footers into wobbling blancharms.

Thankfully, there are designers who understand this. The Dublin-based John Rocha, for example,



FAR LEFT:
Sea print ruffle skirt, £390. Net T-shirt, £104, and crocheted bikini top, £365; all by John Rocha at Harvey Nichols, Knightsbridge, London SW1. Tel: 0171-734 0123.

LEFT:
Chevron T-shirt, £26 by Jigsaw, 126-127 New Bond Street, London W1. Tel: 0171-491 4484.

ABOVE:
Spaghetti-strap dress, £164 by Betty Jackson, 311 Brompton Road, London SW3. Tel: 0171-589 7884.
Loft sofa, £1,250, Aero, 96 Westbourne Grove, London W2. Tel: 0171-221 1950.

Photographer: PAUL MASSEY
Fashion Assistant: Deborah Brett. Hair and make-up: Carol Hart for Mary Quant. Model: Clare Wilson at Models One.

The strong lines are emphasised by pattern, but softened by colours that are just a bit "off". Blue is dominant, with every shade from ice to navy featured in the designers' catwalk shows. Brown remains strong, although winter's chocolate shades have given way to more subdued tones.

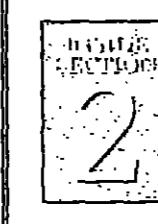
If you buy only one thing for this spring, let it be a trouser suit. Every designer featured at least one in their collection. The best had flat-fronted trousers, cut either straight and narrow, or wide-legged. While some designers are still giving skirts and trousers low waists to elongate the torso, others have gone for a surprisingly high-waisted look, emphasising the slimness of tops and jackets.

The single-button tuxedo was the inspiration for many jackets. The Italian designer Anna Molinari cut hers straight and cropped it at the hipbone. Nicole Farhi's pinstripe suit was a similar length. Both are cut close across the chest, creating a strong V-shape.

So much for the wearable, now for the unwearable. Or rather, the things that appear too dreadful for words, but which may yet take off. This year's "fun fashions" are pedal-pushers and boob-tubes. Fun for whom is a moot point.

ELIE

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How to spend \$10 million and produce a Broadway flop. The expensive art of making musicals, page 34

Danger: you will never be the same again

Jane Shilling on the thrill of the Manolo Blahnik sale

Fifteen years ago this week, on a bitter cold morning, I got up early, left the dark Chelsea basement where I was living at the time, and walked down the road to Old Church Street, where I joined the end of a long queue.

It was a very British queue. Not the cheery, camp stool, anorak and Thermos gang show to be found outside Harrods or Selfridges when the Massive Reductions signs go up, but the sort of *nomenclatura* throng who mill about at the crush bar of the Royal Opera House, or hop discreetly from foot to foot outside the loos at Glyndebourne. A queue with expensive hair and a pale gold mid-winter tan, muffed from neck to ankle in glossy Blackglama mink. A queue whose body language screamed "I am not part of a vulgar gaggle panting to get its hands on a bargain; I simply happen to be standing here, with, admittedly, one or two other people, waiting for admission to an exclusive shoe shop (which I am quite well off enough to patronise outside sale time)." The woman ahead of me turned and half-caught my eye, the tip of her pretty nose, just visible above my mink collar, peony pink with cold. "We must be mad," she said.

Not mad, exactly, but certainly in the grip of an addiction for which, once acquired, there is no cure. Perhaps Manolo Blahnik's sale should carry a health warning — for the instant you step into a pair of his shoes, you are Never The Same Again.

To say that Blahnik is a shoemaker is rather like saying that Fragonard used to dab a bit. He is an artist in shoes. His little shop, presided over by his



An artist in shoes: once in the grip of the Manolo Blahnik addiction, there is no cure.

formidable sister, Evangeline, has about it the intent, rather severe air of an Old Master's studio. His designs have a quality of fantasy, not unusual in art, but very rare in fashion.

It is the fantasy that fuels the addiction. Blahnik is more or less impervious to the vagaries of fashion and his rare excursions into street style (an outstandingly nasty high-heeled rendition of a Timberland boot spring to mind) tend to be ill-advised. The power of his shoes lies in their ability to inspire the collector's rage to own a beautiful object — and the childish belief that Cinderella-like, simply by one's slipping on a pair of jewelled satin slippers or fragile pearly sandals, one's life will be transformed.

Thus, peering in through the shop window on a grey January day, one sees the place full of women in winter overcoats, wobbling on one leg while attempting to thrust a woolly-stocked foot into a little white leather kitten-heeled pump. What they see reflected in the mirror is not the flushed face, the shiny nose and the thick winter tights with their ludicrous summery finial, but a floaty dress, a balmy evening and that elegant little shoe, its vamps cut just

low enough to show the sexy cleft between the toes. These are shoes that take the upper hand. If you let them, I once walked down High Holborn barefoot in a thunderstorm, carrying my Blahnik court shoes rather than expose them to the rain. At least one pair of evening shoes has been lying in its box for years, waiting for an occasion sufficiently grand to merit a wearing. And oh, how I mourn the days that got away. The sandals spangled with Swarovski that I couldn't afford; the pony-skin mules that I allowed my then boyfriend to talk me out of; the black velvet boots with scarlet heels that were a fatal mistake; too fragile pearly sandals, one's life will be transformed.

Fourteen years on, my Chelsea days are long gone, but the power of the Blahnik sale continues, unaltered. Here is a suede boot teetering on a three-inch heel; or perhaps a pair of kitten-heeled courts striped in carnation and ivory. These are shoes for girls who travel everywhere by taxi. But who knows, when I put them on, I might yet find myself transformed into the sort of girl who does so everywhere by taxi...

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Alan Coren



Let us pray that John Major has not shot himself in the fin

I tap the keys, this Tuesday dusk, in fear and trembling. For I love the man this side idolatry, and even, perhaps, that side, too; which is why, as the tyres of John Major's homecoming jet squeal against a grateful nation's tarmac, I pray that in his Pakistani absence things have not gone belly-up for him. We have had quite enough of that already.

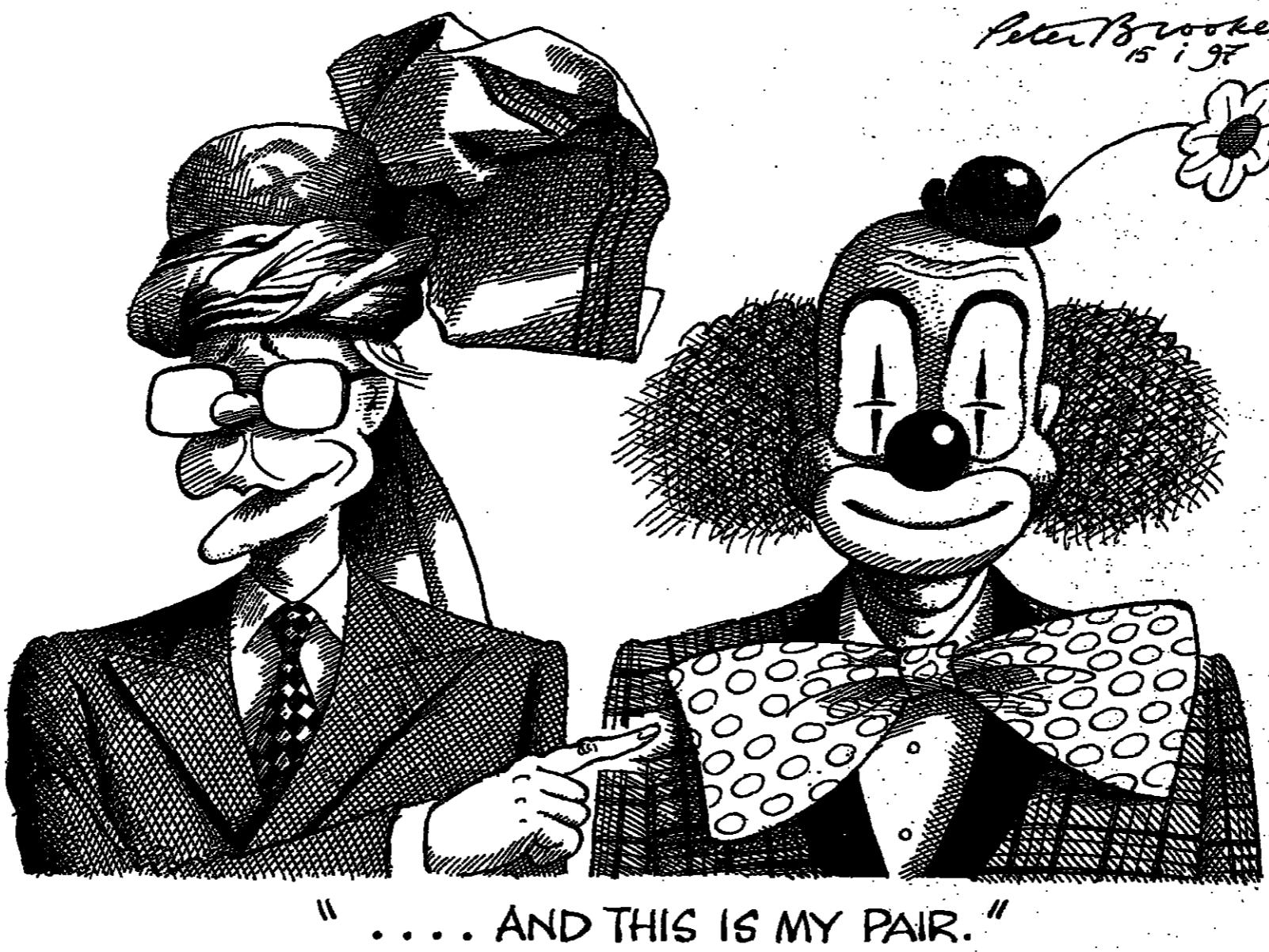
The things will, I'm sure, be at the forefront of his own concern. I feel certain that the first phone call he rushes to make, as Norma waits for their baggage by the carousel, praying that the souvenir *vashmak* in which she plans to trip, blessedly incognito, to her local Safeway, has not been too badly creased in transit, will be to the men looking after his things, to find out whether they are still belly-down. How can I feel so certain of this? Because of the news revealed in last Friday's *Times* that, during the icy weather, the two coppers who live in a hut in the Major's trim Huntingdonshire garden were required to run from it with saucepans of hot water. What they were required to run to was the garden pond, there to empty their saucepans, and run back. As often as necessary. Because, all their other custodial duties notwithstanding, they are also members of the Serious Fish Squad: when, in freezes, our leader is away from home, his bodyguard is charged not merely with ensuring that he has turned the gas off and told the milkman, but also with keeping his goldfish warm. The *PM*, we read, always leaves a stern note to that effect, doubtless underlining three times with his special red ballpoint for he cares deeply not only about you and me but also about his finner constituents. He does not want to come back from doing a bit of leading to find his pond looking like a fishmonger's slab.

But as all too often with John's policies, what we are looking at here is a dodgy conflation of the worthy, the sentimental, and the utterly misguided. That it is worthy speaks for itself. That it is sentimental is spoken for by every long-shaded village batsman, every cheery Rudge-pedalling midwife, every side-whiskered pub landlord pulling warm bitter beneath his marlin-twisting thatch, citizens all of John's other Eden: we can be sure that, over the past few days, after the Majors have trudged wearily back from one ceremonial wing-ding after another, tugged off the earing, unclipped the bow, John has strolled in his socks to the window, gazed up at the Islamabat moon, and thought of that same light sparkling the snow upon a distant English lawn where, between hut and pond, two honest British bobbies in sturdy hobnailed boots are running back and forth with brimming saucepans.

That they will be doing it all night brings me to the bit I speak for, which is the utterly misguided bit. For, caring though it may appear, pouring hot water on a frozen fishpond is the worst thing you can do to it; if the water is less than boiling, it will merely form yet thicker ice; and if it is boiling, while it might, admittedly, drill a small hole in the ice, the sudden change in local temperature will either shock to death any fish which has swum up to see what all the commotion is about, or, no less likely, poach it on the spot. Either way, we are looking at a belly-up situation of the first water.

That is why I tremble so for our Prime Minister. If this tragedy has indeed occurred, when word of it gets out – as word, in an election year, always does – he will be in deep trouble. Paddy Ashdown, trained by the SBS in ad hoc survival, will tell Jeremy Paxman that what Major should have done was leave a ping-pong ball in the pond, so creating a permanent air-vent, any fool knows that, while Tony Blair will apprise John Humphrys of a nifty immersion heater, as used to warm an individual mug of coca in the fetties dorm, only £14.99, run a cable out from the house, and Bob's your guppie. And without draining, both will of course observe, over-pressed and under-funded police resources.

That is why I tremble for John tonight. You know about the British and poor dumb animals. If anything out there has indeed gone belly-up, then all his electoral aspirations could soon be reduced to little more than, in Dr Spooner's imperishable words, a half-warmed fish.



In praise of the second class

If admissions policy is reduced to the mechanically meritocratic, Oxbridge colleges will lose their *raison d'être*

I did not gain a first. A mind-blowing final month of work was not enough. A lesson was learnt and I missed the badge of honour so precious to scholars and so disregarded by everyone else. Had I succeeded I would not be writing this column. A first meant a postgraduate studentship and the initiation rite to an academic career. A first was the Magic Flute that would grant Sarastro's protection from the horrors of the World Outside. It was not to be. I left Oxford and looked towards other horizons.

Since then nobody has ever asked the class of my degree. It means nothing to any job I know, other than that of academic. A first is a notoriously bad prediction of success in later life. Time was when the best undergraduates would excel in the professions and the Empire. Now most firsts are gobblled up by the university system. Other degree classes are all but obsolete. The fourth has gone and the third is being replaced by that absurd euphemism, a "lower second". Only the first comes with a quality guarantee, from academics eager to control their professional intake. An institution always honours those it wants to keep for its own. The monks of Ampleforth used to select as prefects the boys they thought would make the best monks.

Hence the current *Times* correspondence on Oxbridge admissions. A letter from Anthony Lejeune yesterday protested about Oxford and Cambridge colleges treating academic merit as the sole basis for admissions. By doing so they ignore family background and other criteria for collegiality. Colleges, he said, should aim at "creating a community where new entrants will be lifelong members and where young people will grow up, make friends and learn much more than appears on any lecture list." For this, says Mr Lejeune, family and school connections are relevant. And, he might have added, A-level performance is not a sufficient or even necessary condition for performing well in a college community.

Such remarks will send admissions tutors screaming under the nearest pillow. Oxbridge has for decades been indoctrinating itself with the idea that academic merit should dictate admission, so it can avoid the charge of social bias. Merit should be determined by a test, and that test should not be peculiar to one college or university. Even interviews are suspect: he would make a good scrum-half, she has dazzling eyes, that name could be worth touching for the new chemistry lab.

At which point there is no point in colleges and their paraphernalia of fellows, masters, traditions and endowments. Any institution with the

advantages of Oxbridge should be able to spit and polish an elite pre-packaged and delivered to its door by the A-level examiners. Oxbridge colleges are costly and have long received extra state subsidies. They can easily be reduced to halls of residence. If Oxbridge wants only to be top of the UCCA pile, it may as well disband these mini-monasteries with their petty independence. They can come closer to the thriving embrace of Gillian Shephard's Higher Education Funding Council.

British universities are the most archaic of institutions, an Oxbridge college ostensibly the most archaic of all.

It works for only half the year, making even the British court system seem like Silicon Valley. It obeys medieval seasons, disbanding for seedtime and (long) harvest. Teaching methods are unchanged since Gladstone's day. College governance would be

the despair of Erasmus.

Yet the essence of a university, like any human association, is to be more than the sum of its members. An Oxbridge college is a micro-university. Its pre-eminent virtue is in bringing under one roof literally a universe of intellectual callings and characters. It is a truly diverse society. Its duty is therefore not just to select future Fellows – that is, potential firsts – but to find students likely to stimulate each other in a semi-closed environment. If it stops doing this, it loses its reason for existing.

Stephen Monsell, a former admissions tutor at Pembroke College, Cambridge, wrote to the *Times* to deny any favouritism to potential donors. "We would like our admissions decisions to be completely blind," he said. They would avoid judgments "other than on academic and personal qualities relevant to performance at university". On this basis, applicants may soon apply to Oxbridge with nothing but a microchip listing their GCSE and A-level marks implanted under their skin. Admissions tutors could be replaced by code scanners.

At which point there is no point in colleges and their paraphernalia of fellows, masters, traditions and endowments. Any institution with the

poundage, but the splendid creature stood firm."

Any argument for retaining college discretion over admissions is attacked by liberals as merely a way of entrenching Oxbridge's middle-class past. Three decades of fiercely meritocratic criteria have not brought the working classes to Oxford. The university takes the same proportion of its intake (roughly a half) from the independent sector as it did in the 1970s. If admissions tutors want more state-school pupils, they should admit them, not hide behind the skirts of the A-level exams. I suspect they are hypocrites. Oxford and Cambridge

would be happy to sacrifice the bourgeoisie on the altar of merit, so long as they can stay top of the league table. But threaten that status and you can kiss goodbye to favouring the proletariat.

For the moment, Oxbridge can have its cake and eat it. It can be class-blind, meritocratic and powerful all at the same time. I wonder for how much longer. College finances are in a parlous state. Unless the colleges promote their individual diversity – including eccentric admissions – they will not attract the endowments they desperately need as government withdraws its subsidies. The splendid edifice may start to crumble as privatisation creeps up on it.

There will be many a delicious irony. I suspect that places for the fee-paying students will bring more offspring of working-class parents than today's meritocracy. Colleges may even come forward to reverse the uniformity of Oxbridge gender co-education, which has deprived the two universities of their idiosyncrasy (saving a brave handful of female bastions). Colleges may then seriously try to balance an intake with pupils from genuinely deprived backgrounds, rather than the present cosmetic scurry round "good comprehensives". Admissions tutors will have to start working again. Academic superiority may suffer, but in a good cause – that of a well-rounded university.

You cannot staff a living institution with a barren test of past merit. No company or newspaper or partnership would survive that way. Those choosing members of a proper college cannot delegate their professional judgment to a mechanical test. They are choosing a team. The best teams are chosen with a touch of inspiration and an inclination to gamble. Oxbridge is thus a microcosm of every professional institution in this age of standardisation. It either fights for its freedoms and shoulders its responsibilities, or it says goodbye to its common purpose.

Who shall 'scape whipping?

Julian Critchley on the cruelties of Commons pairing

Since Eric Heffer died of cancer, I have been without a regular parliamentary pair, but then I have not needed one. For I have been "in dock" since 1992, suffering from post-polio syndrome, for which I receive a disability allowance. I also have prostate cancer.

The public does not really know what "pairing" means. It has no sexual connotation: it is simply a device whereby two MPs, one Labour and one Conservative, seek the permission of their whips' offices and agree to be absent, a manoeuvre which makes no difference to the result of any vote.

I listened to PM last night to hear Joe Ashton, the Labour MP, usually an amiable fellow, boast that in order to keep Jim Callaghan in office in the late 1970s, six Labour MPs had met their death in the line of duty.

Donald Dewar, the Labour chief whip, has banned all pairing on the ground that the Tory whips "cheated" in the fishing vote before Christmas. I voted with the Government, but bear no responsibility for whatever antics our whips' office may have got up to. But I, and others in far worse health than me, are to bear the consequences.

Since 1992, I have voted rarely in person. I can manage a 7pm vote, but at 10pm when the majority of divisions take place, I have been "nodded through". This arcane process means that MPs drive into New Palace Yard and park with ministerial cars at 9.45pm and wait to be checked by a Labour and a Conservative whip. We are then waved cheerfully on our way.

On one occasion since the last election, my car was parked behind an ambulance which had borne a Labour MP from the cancer ward of some hospital in Yorkshire, where he had only recently undergone an operation. He died shortly afterwards. He might have been paired with me, and I would have been saved a good deal of discomfort, and a great deal of pain.

On another occasion, when I was "nodded through" at ten o'clock, I noticed in front of me a London taxi cab inside which was Mrs Jo Richardson, MP, apparently wired up to some electrical/medical apparatus. The Labour whip who came down to check me through said "She'll soon be dead," and indeed she soon was. She, too, poor woman, might have been left in peace.

Although on crutches, I count as "walking wounded". I suffer from no life-threatening disease, although a course of radiotherapy in the summer of 1993 knocked the stuffing out of me. I have sat in some discomfort in my car, having been driven from Ludlow at our whip's behest, and by so doing voted either on a vote of no confidence, or in order to thwart the Eurosceptics. I was happy to do so.

The Government chief whip, Alastair Goodlad, who looks rather like Jeffrey Archer's butler, has been very decent to me. So was Richard Ryder. The Tory whips' office was once manned exclusively by gentlemen (this is no longer quite the case, but then the Tory party has changed since I was first elected in 1959). When they rebuked a Tory MP for some misdemeanour, their language is so understated as frequently to be misunderstood.

The Labour whip's office, on the other hand, has more in common with a sergeants' mess. They eff and blind with the best of them. Does this go some way to explaining the callousness with which they have treated their own sick and wounded in the past? There is such a thing as carrying party loyalty too far.

I think what I have written does serve, not only to explain to an unheeding public what pairing is, but to point to the humbug that is so characteristic of Donald Dewar's not-so-men. I did not vote last night on the Finance Bill. I was paired, either with a Labour MP who shall be nameless (he is gravely ill) or, and this is much more likely, with an Ulster Protestant who preferred to stay up the Shankill Road. But I expect to be "nodded through" several more times before the election is finally called. Sir Julian is Conservative MP for Aldershot. Owing to ill-health he will not be standing at the election.

Another Miss



Miss USA 1996

The State of the Union is the occasion on which the President outlines his plans for the year in a televised address to the joint Houses of Congress. This year, it was planned for 5 February. Calls, however, went through to the White House from CBS, the television network, which said it was contractually obliged to show the Miss USA pageant from Louisiana. The President would either have to find another day or be bumped off the schedule altogether.

It was no contest: the dignity of the presidency v television exposure. Exposure won and the White House agreed to move the speech to February 4. So now those eclectic viewers to whom both pageants appeal can see the President's earnest, suited, ramblings on one night and the bikini-test the next.

Michael Jackson, the peculiar singer, is never one to hide his emotions. On his recent world tour, he leaned over to a security guard to ask what he was eating.

Pox-wallah

OTHER than the milliner who placed that ludicrous hat on John Major's head, the hero of the PM's trip to the sub-continent has been his PPS in the Upper House, Lord

McColl of Dulwich. Ever at Mr Major's beck, McColl has been acting as the flying doctor for the travelling retinue of Downing Street staff, businessmen and press.

McColl is Professor of Surgery at the University of London, and regularly operates at Guy's Hospital. Much of his trip to the Khyber Pass has been spent with dispensing remedies to Major's retinue. Delhi has hit hard.

No more of those Prince of Darkness tags for Tristan Garel-Jones, Conservative MP for Watford, and the man who sledgehammered the Maastricht Bill through Parliament. He has written a piece in defence of the Royal Family for *Hell* magazine. Presumably, they pay better than the more earnest

When the guard replied that he was eating walnuts, Jackson asked: "What's that?" On being told that it was baby calf, the icon burst into tears.

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THE SILENT SECRETARY

Popular protesters in the Balkans still await British support

Malcolm Rifkind is a Foreign Secretary distinguished by his determined early support for the cause of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and the close attention he continues to pay to the region. The Balkans, by contrast, have always seemed to unnerve him, both as Defence Secretary and in his present job.

Caution was his watchword in Bosnia, born of an exaggerated fear that tough words could cost the lives of British troops. No such consideration enters into the drama on Serbia's streets, where a groundswell of democratic outrage appears finally to be forcing President Milosevic to reverse his fraudulent stealing of opposition victories in last November's municipal elections. Yet in public at least, Mr Rifkind has yet to improve on his delicately expressed concern, at the London conference in early December, about 'press freedom' and 'other matters relating to the recent elections' in Serbia.

The Foreign Office, proudly pointing to the British Ambassador's easy access to Mr Milosevic, contends that private negotiation is just as important as public pressure. But access in such situations can be purchased at too high a price. The Foreign Office should be less than proud of its statement, after Mr Milosevic bussed his loyalist henchmen into Belgrade in an attempt to turn peaceful protests violent, that 'all sides should refrain from acts of provocation'. Mr Rifkind cannot be unaware that in dealing with political bosses of the Milosevic stripe, neither private letters nor statements by Foreign Office spokesmen cut much ice.

Megaphone diplomacy has its limitations, but its uses too — and never more so than when a determined people asks no more of the outside world than solid moral backing at the highest political level. What Western European statesmen say matters because the demand for 'European' standards of democracy is an important ingredient in the

popular ferment now spreading from Serbia to Bulgaria. Within these ex-Communist elites, even the most ruthless must factor this 'European' view into their calculations as they struggle to retain control. The leverage thus created should be used to the full.

The West failed to throw its full diplomatic weight into preventing war in Croatia and then in Bosnia, and paid heavily for the failure. It should be all the more aware of the ease with which politics in this combustible region can turn violent. A century ago, Gladstone's eloquence made the fate of these European outposts of the crumbling Ottoman Empire a burning political issue in this country. Britain has now been out-Gladstoned even by Hervé de Charette, France's generally grey Foreign Minister, who yesterday demanded the prompt reinstatement of the election results and insisted that 'the time when one could cancel elections and ignore the people's will is over in Europe'. That is what Mr Rifkind should have been proclaiming from the rooftops, right from the start of the courageous and inventive citizens' protests that have turned Serbia's cities into great public forums.

With the greatest reluctance, Mr Milosevic at last appears resigned to ceding opposition control over Belgrade and Niš, Serbia's second city. This is only a tactical retreat, using legal smokescreens to blur the contours of each concession and thus deny his opponents a clear-cut political triumph. But people will not be fooled; once it is confirmed that he has given way, they will see their way to prising wide open the cracked edifice of his police state. Success in Belgrade will hasten the departure of Bulgaria's Socialists, who have forfeited their democratic mandate by their incontinent and corrupt misrule. It is the moment to pile on external pressure. The Foreign Secretary's first speech on these dramatic events is awaited.

PARTNERSHIP FOR GOOD

The Prince and Mrs Lawrence are natural allies

After Birmingham's ugly jeans, a voice of reason has been raised in defence of the Prince of Wales and his works. While a superficial debate about the succession has occupied TV producers, the Prince, through his Trust, has contented himself with quiet work which reaches those whose plight is never likely to attract the cameras.

It is wholly appropriate that Frances Lawrence should seek to advance her agenda for a re-stitching of civil society through the Trust. It seeks to work with the excluded young whose condition her late husband gave his life to improving. The Trust could provide the ideal vehicle for ensuring that her ethical insights and moral force are grounded in practical expertise.

The Prince's Trust celebrates its 21st anniversary this year with a solid record of success. It helps to present Britain's best face to the world. The highlights of both President Chirac's and Nelson Mandela's recent visits to Britain were Prince's Trust events. The Prince's Youth Business Trust has, without any fanfare to accompany its activities, helped to create 30,000 new companies and 60,000 new jobs. The achievement is all the more impressive given the Trust's direction of its efforts towards the disadvantaged young in neglected urban areas. Although its motivation has been philanthropic, the Trust has been as successful an investor as any commercial concern. The author James Morton has paid tribute to the Prince's efforts in *Investing with the Grand Masters*, arguing that 'there is not a venture capital trust around today which can top this results over the last ten years'.

The spirit of voluntarism which the Trust embodies has succeeded despite the cynicism of some in Westminster. Politicians of Left and Right have a natural tendency

either to stifle, or embrace too tightly, initiatives from outside. The Prince's volunteer schemes, which some in the political classes hoped might wither for want of support, have now proved so successful that parties are clamouring to associate themselves with the Trust's activities. It would be in the best interests of the Trust, the Prince, and a flourishing civil society if politicians were to restrict their involvement to encouragement. The success of the Trust has been built on the enthusiasm of the engaged, not the direction of the conscript.

Politicians should also resist the temptation to enlist the Trust's latest volunteer for their own colours. Mrs Lawrence's campaign has, in the Prime Minister's own words, 'struck a chord' and members of his Government, most conspicuously the Home Secretary, have tried to give legislative effect to her aims. Mrs Lawrence's message has also found an answering call from politicians of other parties. But, more importantly, it has touched most directly many who consider themselves detached from the political process. Her manifesto cannot be the property of those who will be publishing their own, very different documents, in the coming months. Clumsy attempts by the politically motivated to appropriate her efforts run directly counter to the spirit of honest, earnest principle her words embody.

Unencumbered by false friends and misconceived expectations, the Prince and Mrs Lawrence might achieve a great deal. The work of the Trust has helped Britain to recover its reputation for pioneering social policy and given hope to thousands. The popular momentum for action to renew society articulated by Mrs Lawrence required a vehicle: The Prince's Trust is made for the terrain she wishes to cover.

EQUAL BEFORE THE LAW

Clinton's claim would establish a dubious precedent

As the one branch of American Government immune from the ballot box and television camera, the Supreme Court can normally command dignity and decorum. That capacity may be severely challenged over the next few months by *Clinton v Jones* with its attendant sexual sensationalism. The decision eventually reached may have a profound impact on Bill Clinton's political fortunes, and hence that of many other figures, during his second term.

The central legal issue is whether a serving President can claim immunity from prosecution in civil cases because of the unreasonable burdens such a situation would place on his time. Moreover, would such executive immunity preclude not only the onset of a trial but, as the White House has strongly asserted, the discovery of relevant witnesses and collection of related documentation as well?

This whole affair has produced a plethora of paradox. Conservatives who have historically been sympathetic to a strong presidency, and suspicious of sexual harassment allegations, have suddenly seen matters in a different light. Likewise, liberal defenders of the President have sheltered behind arguments first aired by President Nixon during the Watergate era. Meanwhile, feminist organisations, who were in the vanguard of the campaign against Clarence Thomas reaching the Supreme Court, have been curiously quiet concerning Mr Clinton.

At Monday's formal hearing the nine justices finally had their chance to cross-examine both sets of lawyers. Those lively exchanges suggest that a unanimous judgment is unlikely. The Clinton contention that the Oval Office could be paralysed by politically motivated lawsuits was — rightly — accorded respect. However, at least some on the bench were clearly disturbed by the novel and sweeping doctrine of White House immunity being requested.

So they should be. It would establish the precedent that no President could ever be sued in a civil case, even when the purported offence occurred before the oath of office was administered and when the putative incident was unrelated to official duties. If those acting for Mrs Jones cannot even start to collect evidence until the year 2001, it is difficult to believe that their client will not be placed at a substantial disadvantage.

The better interests of justice demand that depositions be taken and a trial judge now be appointed. That person should exercise the utmost sensitivity in the scheduling of legal action, accepting delay if there are indeed compelling demands on the President, proceeding if there are not. On Monday, Mr Clinton will again pledge to 'protect, preserve, and defend the Constitution of the United States'. That document boldly states that all Americans stand as equals before the law. Mr Clinton's claim appears incompatible with this noble principle.

From Mrs Danielle Vyse

Sir, The survey comparing British and French teachers, reported by your Health Correspondent on January 9, appears to me to be biased against British teachers.

As a Frenchwoman and a qualified teacher living in England, I know why British teachers are a lot more stressed. Their French counterparts are required to teach, and that is all: no playground and lunch duties, no extra supervision when another teacher is absent, no extra-curricular activities, fewer hours spent teaching, no necessity to stay at school during free periods, generally better pay. Parents, not schools, are blamed for children's bad behaviour.

In the words of my French sister-in-law, who teaches English in a secondary school in France: 'Conditions are not the same. There'd be a revolution here if they were imposed on us.'

Yours etc.
DANIELLE VYSE,
47 Southridge Rise,
Croydon, East Sussex.
January 9.

From Mrs S. E. King

Sir, When a child I'm sure I was taught that squirrels hibernate.

Why, in the recent cold snap when temperatures have apparently been the lowest recorded for nine years, have the squirrels that live in our loft not only acted as an alarm clock by noisily running up and down the length of the house first thing in the morning, but been seen outside frisking in the snow?

We were relying on them being in a deep sleep so that we could kick them out without contest.

Yours faithfully,
S. KING,
Longfield,
Burne Avenue, Wickford, Essex.
January 10.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9KN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Britain's goals on joining Market

From Professor Lord Balfour, FBA

Sir, Suppose in 1961 Harold Macmillan and Edward Heath, in opening Britain's first bid to join what we called the 'Common Market', had said to the British people:

'We are asking you to embark on a venture which will end up before the end of the century with Britain becoming a province in the European federation or "super-state": many of your laws will emanate from outside your own borders, and the validity of those passed by Parliament will be decided by a court in which you will have one voice among many; and suppose that policies dreamed up elsewhere could ruin the livelihoods of many of your fellow citizens.'

Does Dr John Campbell ('Did Heath deceive Britain over Europe?', January 11) or anyone else think that the answer would have been other than a resounding 'no'?

When last year I finished my book *Britain and European Union: Dialogue of the Deaf* I was uncertain whether those who brought the country to its present predicament were themselves misled or whether, intentionally or otherwise, they deceived others.

My view that there was a positive intention on the part of the makers of policy to secure Britain's participation in such a structure is, I think, demonstrated in the November 23, 1996, *Economist* article by Sir Nicholas Henderson, and the long review of books on Europe by Quentin Davies, MP, in *The Times Literary Supplement* of January 3, 1997.

It now seems to me to be the case that section of the British elite were so pessimistic about this country's capacity to perform as a successful nation state that they were determined to bring about the alternative: its submergence in a supranational entity. At no point did the desires of the mass of their fellow citizens appear to influence them. The arrogance of it.

Yours truly,
BELOFF,
House of Lords.
January 11.

From Mr Richard Buttrey

Sir, Dr John Campbell is incorrect when he says, 'No one could claim at the time of the 1975 referendum that the goal of monetary union had not been spelt out.'

I quote from Harold Wilson's pamphlet, *Britain's New Deal in Europe*, issued to every household in advance of the referendum:

There was a threat to employment in Britain from the movement in the Common Market towards an Economic and Monetary Union. This threat could have forced us to accept fixed exchange rates for the pound, restricting industrial growth and so putting jobs at risk. This threat has been removed.

Those last five words were clearly meant to indicate that monetary union had been rejected.

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD BUTTREY,
6 Marlborough Crescent,
Grappenhall,
Nr Warrington, Cheshire.
January 11.

From Mr Peter Gardner

Sir, Dr John Campbell's article contains the weakest argument I have ever seen and merely proves that the original charge is correct. He says that Sir Edward Heath 'never disguised that his conception of Europe was a political community' and confirms that in October 1972 he, Pompilio and Brandt 'agreed to press on with economic and monetary union'.

We are probably all familiar with the line in the 1971 White Paper — 'there will be no erosion of essential national sovereignty', and the White Paper at the time of the 1975 referendum explicitly said that there were no plans for monetary union.

The charge of deceit is clearly borne out by the facts.

Yours faithfully,
PETER GARDNER
(Prospective parliamentary candidate,
UK Independence Party,
Oxford East,
78 St Mary's Road, Oxford.
January 12.

From Mrs Danielle Vyse

Sir, The survey comparing British and French teachers, reported by your Health Correspondent on January 9, appears to me to be biased against British teachers.

As a Frenchwoman and a qualified teacher living in England, I know why British teachers are a lot more stressed. Their French counterparts are required to teach, and that is all: no playground and lunch duties, no extra supervision when another teacher is absent, no extra-curricular activities, fewer hours spent teaching, no necessity to stay at school during free periods, generally better pay. Parents, not schools, are blamed for children's bad behaviour.

In the words of my French sister-in-law, who teaches English in a secondary school in France: 'Conditions are not the same. There'd be a revolution here if they were imposed on us.'

Yours etc.
DANIELLE VYSE,
47 Southridge Rise,
Croydon, East Sussex.
January 9.

'Crossover' chart hits the right note

From the Reverend J. R. Lowerson

Sir, I believe the conventional term for what you describe as the new 'crossover' top 50 chart for classical 'easy listening' music (report and form, article, January 7) is 'middlebrow'.

Alas, since its first use in the 1920s, that solid ascription has been largely pejorative. What it represents has been ignored by most critics, music historians and the new cultural theorists alike, yet it sums up much of British taste. Perhaps the word 'middlebrow', with its firm honesty and comfortable, even cosy, sense make it seem less dynamic than 'crossover', which sounds as if it is trying desperately to be somewhere else.

Yours faithfully,
PATRICK DEUCHAR
(Chief Executive,
Royal Albert Hall,
Kensington Gore, SW7.
January 7.

From Dr G. Silverstone

Sir, In your leading article today you again raise the matter of Claudio Abbado's objection to the use of highlights of his Mahler recordings on a single compact disc.

We can only guess what Mahler's own views might have been and can never know how other great symphonists might have felt about propagation of isolated movements.

However, it would be of interest to know the feeling of contemporary living symphonists on this matter. How would Sir Malcolm Arnold, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and Sir Michael Tippett feel about the recording of isolated movements from their symphonies on compilation discs?

Yours sincerely,
G. SILVERSTONE,
34 The Avenue, Sale, Cheshire.
January 7.

From the Chief Executive of the Royal Albert Hall

Sir, Once again we hear high-pitched squeaking as the cultural elite shoot themselves in the foot.

The debate over 'crossover' music and its charts seems to have brought to the fore some of the less palatable, patronising opinions of those who believe that classical art forms, whether in performance or visually, are reserved for either the very rich or those whose vocabulary will remain forever

It now seems to me to be the case that section of the British elite were so pessimistic about this country's capacity to perform as a successful nation state that they were determined to bring about the alternative: its submergence in a supranational entity. At no point did the desires of the mass of their fellow citizens appear to influence them. The arrogance of it.

Yours truly,
BELOFF,
House of Lords.
January 11.

From the Head Master of Worth School

Sir, Worth's experience contradicts Simon Jenkins' hypothesis that books and computers are in opposition.

Yours faithfully,
DARRYL MEAD
(Senior Curator, Science),
Museum of Transport, Kelvin Hall,
1 Bunhouse Road, Glasgow.
January 7.

From Mr Darryl Mead

Sir, Simon Jenkins is too harsh in his criticism. Books have had at least 500 years to perfect the art of delivering an idea, which can be absorbed without outside assistance.

It is unsurprising that the Internet, a potential world library, still has some rough edges at a mere five years of age. Given time, its inventiveness and immediacy will complement the printed book.

A computer hooked to the Internet is vastly more cumbersome than a book, but in a few years most of the books ever printed will be cheaply available through the net, almost irrespective of the readers' location. I look forward to more access to both.

Yours faithfully,
DARRYL MEAD
(Senior Curator, Science),
Museum of Transport, Kelvin Hall,
1 Bunhouse Road, Glasgow.
January 7.

From Mr Ian MacPhail

Sir, The Young People's Trust for the Environment wrote to Mr Major, prior to his visit to India, asking him to raise the tiger crisis at the highest possible level. We were delighted to read (report, January 10) that he has done this and express our thanks to him.

However, we were dismayed to read in the same report that the UK will be offering £50,000 to groups researching ways to improve conservation methods. This will be fiddling while Rome burns. Vast sums have already been spent this way to no effect.

Only vigorous and adequately funded law enforcement will prevent the Indian tiger from

OBITUARIES

Lord Todd, OM, organic chemist, Nobel Laureate and former President of the Royal Society, died on January 10 aged 89. He was born in Glasgow on October 2, 1907.

Alexander Robertus Todd was a formidable figure, his scientific authority matched by a commanding physical presence. His work on the chemistry of the nucleic acids — the elements of heredity — helped to form the foundation on which Francis Crick and James Watson built their successful model of the structure of DNA. Todd also was the first to synthesise many important biological molecules, including the vitamins and the chemicals responsible for generating energy in the muscles.

From the mid-1950s, Todd became one of the leading statesmen of science, chairing a huge range of advisory committees and becoming President of the Royal Society in 1975. His public statements, issued in a gruff tone and a forthright manner that seemed to brook no contradiction, contained much Scottish common sense. He gave warning in 1967, for example, that the rush towards comprehensive education would risk lowering standards, and was similarly sceptical of the Robbins-inspired expansion of the universities. He repeatedly urged the better use of science to human affairs.

Todd was educated at Allan Glen's School and the University of Glasgow. Between 1929 and 1931, he studied at the University of Frankfurt-am-Main, where he graduated doctor of philosophy in natural sciences. He then worked at the Dyson Perrins Laboratory in Oxford under Sir Robert Robinson, and was briefly a Reader in Biochemistry in the University of London before his appointment to the Chair of Chemistry at Manchester in 1938.

In 1944 he was appointed Professor of Organic Chemis-

try in the University of Cambridge, where he remained until his retirement in 1971. He was elected a Fellow of Christ's College at the same time. Master in 1963, and was Master of the Salters' Company during 1966. He was an honorary Fellow of Oriel, his old Oxford college, and was the first chancellor of the University of Strathclyde.

An organic chemist of great merit, Todd will be remembered best for his researches into natural products. These were numerous and extensive, many proving to be of fundamental importance. His work on anthocyanins, vitamins, nucleotides and coenzymes stand out. He was the first to synthesise nucleotides, organic compounds made up of bases, sugars and phosphate groups, which when strung together make up DNA and RNA, the molecules of heredity. It was for this, principally, that he was awarded the 1957 Nobel Prize for Chemistry.

With colleagues he also synthesised adenosine diphosphate and adenosine triphosphate, of central importance as co-enzymes in making biochemical processes in the body, including muscle-building, digestion and respiration.

Todd was well over 6 ft tall, inspiring the disrespectful nickname of "Todd Almighty" among his students, and he also thought in a big way. The bigger the problems and the larger the molecules, the more he relished them.

An important achievement of his career in Cambridge was the rehousing of the Royal Society in 1942 and was awarded the Davy Medal in 1949 and the Royal Medal in 1955. Numerous honorary degrees came along in quick succession, among which may be mentioned honorary LLBs at Glasgow, Melbourne, Edinburgh and California. He also received the honorary degree of doctor of science from London, Madrid, Exeter, Leicestershire, Sheffield, Wales, Yale, Strasbourg, Harvard, Liverpool, Adelaide, Strathclyde and Oxford.

Knighted in 1954, Todd was



created a life peer in 1962 and appointed OM in 1977. His

career in science policymaking was as long as his list of academic honours. He was never afraid of speaking out, asserting repeatedly that Britain would decline unless it could learn to use its scientific discoveries more skilfully.

In 1956, as chairman of the Advisory Council on Scientific Policy, he complained that Britain was failing to keep up with the Soviet Union in science, and urged more people to learn Russian. His forthright approach as ACSF chairman led disgruntled physicists to rename the council "the Association of Chemists for the Suppression of Physics".

Today, it is too, requires replacement. OM and Todd was indeed

when he chaired the Royal Commission on Medical Education, which reported in 1968. Among its recommendations were the merger of many London medical schools, and a substantial increase in the numbers of doctors trained.

Todd was, in general, an affable person, but there were among his colleagues a number who knew him no better after 20 or 30 years' acquaintance than they did on their first encounter. Although many of his chairmanships were crowned with success, there were times in chairing some meetings when he did not excel. This trait, no doubt, stemmed from his endeavour to be fair and objective, to give all a chance to express their minds. When, however, he had settled a point in his own mind it was rarely changed by subsequent meetings or discussions. He was a man of discernment, but on occasions would be, or appear to be, somewhat remote.

This remoteness cannot, however, dim the memory of a person who did much for Cambridge science and Christ's College over so many years. Of the latter he proved an excellent Master. True, he was not enamoured with the shifting detail of college business or the indecision of colleagues, but he was effective where it mattered most.

He had a sharp eye for young men of ability and backed them strongly. He lacked envy of the young — an admirable and rare trait in the distinguished old. He was never in favour of saving money at the expense of students or putting buildings before fellowships. Even more remarkably, considering the demands on his time, he and his wife entertained every undergraduate who entered the college. They both enjoyed social life and took all the opportunities that college life offered, particularly to the college's lasting benefit.

He married Alison, daughter of the physiologist Sir Henry Dale. She died in 1987. He is survived by a son and two daughters.

HEIDI BEER

Heidi Beer, actress and artist, died on December 18 aged 79. She was born on July 16, 1917.

THE gifted wife of Sydney Beer who founded the National Symphony Orchestra and often conducted the London Philharmonic during and after the Second World War, Heidi Beer was born Baroness Maria von Maasburg. Educated in Vienna and in France, she grew up to read and write five European languages.

She began her career in Hollywood, taking minor roles for Columbia, Paramount and United Artists. There she mixed with Noel Coward, Basil Rathbone and Marlene Dietrich.

In 1939 she married the Liverpool textile magnate Sydney Beer. His reputation was as the man who virtually did break the bank, not at Monte Carlo, as is often written, but in the casino at Cannes. He had also been guest conductor at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, in 1938.

His war work kept him in London where, though he and his wife had a flat in Park Lane, they lived mainly at the Ritz and at Claridges — Heidi was not a dab hand at cooking. At lunches she would quite often find herself seated next to General de Gaulle because of her excellent French. She also claimed that he was among the most difficult of conversationalists.

While staying with the then Duke of Westminster, she was the only person who managed to land a salmon, and though, as was his way with pretty women, he proposed to her,



she declined the offer. After the war, and a triumphant concert tour of Europe in 1946, the Beers lived partly on the Continent, where the Duke of Windsor would enjoy her company because he liked, as he said, to talk German to "the beautiful Mrs Beer".

They also had a flat at Chagford in west Somerset, the home of her sister, Lady Benedicta St Loe Malet, whose husband Sir Edward had done much to help the surviving victims of Belsen in the district of Germany he administered after the war.

As a widow after the death of her husband in 1971 Heidi Beer began a new career in painting under the name of Emaldi; an old family retainer who had saved her father's life. Her painting often harked back to the Vienna she had known between the wars, and she held several successful exhibitions. In her old age, partly blind and with a diminished fortune, she divided her time between the South of France and a Methodist home in west Somerset.

She is survived by a daughter, Mitzi.

PETER LANGDON-DAVIES

Peter Langdon-Davies, former Chief Commons Commissioner, died on December 15 aged 77. He was born on June 23, 1919.

AS A young man of 18, in the year of the Anschluss, Peter Langdon-Davies was in Vienna, helping Jews to escape the Nazis. In his seventies he became Chief Commons Commissioner, by his judgments helping commoners in the thousands of acres of the United Kingdom which still remain common land to understand and assert their ancient rights. In between, his career took him into such complex terrain as that of agricultural law in Europe, where for many years he was the chairman of the Agricultural Law Association and president of the Comité Européen de droit rural.

Peter Langdon-Davies was the son of John Langdon-Davies, a prolific commentator and author of the 1930s. He was educated at Leighton Park and at Trinity College, Cambridge. After his brief student days in Austria, he enlisted in the Royal Artillery and served in North Africa and in Italy, where he was taken prisoner. After the war, he served briefly as a staff officer in the psychological branch of the British Army of Occupation in Graz in Austria.

In 1948 he was elected a Bencher of the Inner Temple. He was conspicuous for his devotion to the traditions of the Bar.

Peter Langdon-Davies leaves a widow, Cynthia, a son and a daughter.



CAVAN O'CONNOR

1930 until the 1960s he was one of the bestselling recording artists and, as a stage performer, he topped variety theatres all over Britain.

Dressed in battered hat, shabby jacket and stout cords he would saunter onto stage against a backdrop of fields and hedgerows: "Nostalgic

Irish ballads were his stock-in-trade — *The Mountains of Mourne*, *The Rose of Tralee*.

Cavan O'Connor was born in Nottingham. He left school at the age of 13 to become an apprentice in the art printing trade. During the First World War he tried to join the Royal Navy but was rejected after it

was discovered that he had pretended to be three years older than he was. He was later accepted by the Royal Horse Artillery.

After demobilisation and two years in the dole queue, O'Connor won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music in 1921. Later that year he

joined Sir Nigel Playfair for a season at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, singing in *The Beggar's Opera* and later in *The Duenna and Riverside Nights*. Lilian Baylis, who saw these performances, was impressed and engaged him at both the Old Vic and Sadler's Wells in the days when these two theatres produced everything from classical opera to ballet or straight theatre.

By this time, however,

O'Connor was more interested in light entertainment. During the 1920s he made hundreds of recordings, his first hit being *Home*, for which he received the sum of £2. This was followed by *I'm Only a Strollin' vagabond* (which became his signature tune), *Come Back Paddy Riley*, *Kathleen and Daybreak*. On one occasion he made 40 discs in five days. Struggling to make ends meet financially, he would work under different pseudonyms — Cliff Connolly, Terence O'Neil, Alan Sullivan and Pat O'Dell, for example — for competing recording companies.

In 1935 O'Connor was

launched to stardom when he appeared on a weekly radio programme, *The Vagabond Lover*, singing anonymously. By the time his identity was finally revealed he had become one of the most highly paid broadcasters in Britain, second only to Gracie Fields.

O'Connor travelled to America in 1937 where he appeared as the guest star on the Eddie Cantor show. Two years later he was asked by Jack Benny to take part in a series but, since war had just broken out, he did not accept.

Instead, he joined the Home Guard until, after contracting

bronchitis, he was released to resume his career as a singer. He had his own BBC radio show in 1946 which, broadcast on Sundays at lunchtime, achieved listening figures of more than 14 million.

With the growing popularity of television in the 1960s and the consequent decline of music-hall, O'Connor's popularity waned. This was not helped by his detestation of the microphone, which he would disparagingly refer to as the "gobstick". But when Don Ross, the president of the British Musical Society, invited him to top the bill on a number of short provincial dates, O'Connor's career enjoyed a brief Indian summer. Fans who had faithfully collected his records since the 1930s turned out in force, queuing outside stage doors.

His last stage appearance

was in 1985 at the Hackney Empire in London, where he appeared as the guest star on the Eddie Cantor show. Two years later he was asked by Jack Benny to take part in a series but, since war had just broken out, he did not accept.

In 1929 he married Rita Odoli-Teyle. She and his three sons survive him.

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In the first of two reports on homeless people, Rachel Kelly looks at the problems they face finding primary healthcare

Passport to a doctor for the homeless

Vagrants who visit hospitals instead of a GP can cost the NHS three times as much

The recent icy weather that has swept Britain has highlighted the fate of the homeless. As if a lack of shelter were not worry enough, a new report tells how the men and women of the road have to struggle to get treatment for the array of medical problems they suffer.

The report, by the housing charity Shelter, says that many people living on the streets are forced to turn to hospitals' accident and emergency departments, because they have difficulty in finding a GP. Such visits cost three times as much as treatment by a family doctor.

Researchers surveyed the 11,873 homeless who visited the accident and emergency department of London's University College Hospital over a year. The cost was £44 a head, compared to £15.49 had they visited a GP. Shelter says that the hospital could have saved £60,000 if homeless people had seen a GP.

Mental illness was the second most common complaint of homeless people attending the department, although in seven out of ten cases the visit was inappropriate because they had apparently had no earlier contact with mental health workers.

Other people with respiratory illness were using the accident and emergency department to obtain prescriptions for their inhalers, a service which should be provided by GPs, the report says.

Chris Holmes, the director of Shelter, says: "This is the people of the difficulties faced by people without a permanent address in finding a doctor who is willing to take them on. They are forced to resort to casualty departments for what is effectively primary healthcare." While the Government's Patient's Charter says that

all people have a right to healthcare, homeless people are, he says, being denied this basic right. The report recommends reforming the GP system to make it easier for the homeless to register. Only 63 per cent of homeless people in the study are registered, compared with 97 per cent of the wider public.

The report also recommends the development of drop-in clinics at set times for those who have difficulty in meeting appointments, and providing GPs in casualty departments.

A British Medical Association spokeswoman says: "The points that Shelter makes about costs are valid, and it is true that everyone should have the right to access to healthcare. But the extra cost of treating the homeless in accident and emergency departments is not as worrying as the fact that the care they get there is not likely to be as appropriate as the long-term continuity provided by a GP."

She adds that doctors specialising in medical care for the homeless believe that there is no reason for GPs to refuse to treat them. This is particularly true for long-term hostel residents.

Dr Nicholas Robinson, who for the past 12 years has been running a clinic for residents at the Thorncliffe Hotel, at Heston, near Hounslow in west London, which is used as a hostel for the homeless, says: "I'll never refuse to see anybody. GPs should be responsive to these very needy people; doctors are contractually obliged to provide services. "It may be slightly more difficult to treat homeless patients, but it only takes a network of sensible local services. This shouldn't be a problem for GPs."

The Thorncliffe Hotel has a clinic in which a doctor and a psychiatric nurse provide "outreach" care for



Dr Simon Ramsden treats a patient at the clinic while others wait: "A lot of homeless people feel awkward about going into surgeries," he says



residents twice a week. Many of the people staying at the hostel are refugees who arrive in Britain at Heathrow, needing sustained medical care. This presents language problems: 50 languages have been encountered. There are also inadequate medical records and too often confusion over the patient's name.

One solution may be the Records Across London Project, in which homeless people are issued with a passport-style health diary containing

medical details for doctors and useful contacts for the patients.

At present, 100 health diaries have been issued in a pilot scheme, with plans to issue 10,000 in London this March. Other health authorities throughout Britain are said to be interested.

Simon Kinsey, project co-ordinator, says: "We're hoping that anybody who is mobile and uses more than one clinic or GP will benefit from this scheme. The usual prob-

lem of an administrative backlog won't be there, however quickly the patient moves around. It will also cut down on drug abuse from addicts getting prescriptions from two doctors simultaneously."

The Department of Health is running 28 projects around the country to bring the homeless into primary healthcare, although these have been subject to government cuts, causing six to close in the past year.

● Next week: how government cuts threaten the homeless

The clinic that helps the down and outs

Patrick Flint has been using the Great Chapel Street Medical Centre, off Oxford Street, for the past six years. Before becoming homeless seven years ago, Flint, 56, from Newcastle, worked for 20 years as a painter and decorator.

Registered as disabled with problems in one leg, he lost his home after an operation prevented him from being able to work. "I came to London from Gateshead for an operation at the Middlesex Hospital," he says. "The day after my operation I was discharged by the hospital and had nowhere to go. I didn't know where to sleep. I spent my first night out on The Strand and I lived on the streets for five years."

During that time he had chronic bronchitis and his leg worsened. At first he had no healthcare at all. He has since made use of the Great Chapel Street clinic. There is no need for registration or booking. Patients need only be sober and non-violent.

Despite these rules, doctors are threatened about once a month and the police have often been called in to make evictions.

"I was lucky to find this place," Mr Flint says. "If you didn't know about it, you'd be lost. Lots of people living on the streets are ill, especially the older ones. We're always hearing about young people having nowhere to go, but people of my age used to have jobs before becoming homeless."

Dr Simon Ramsden, who practises at the clinic, said: "For many of our patients who have found somewhere to live, this place remains preferable to an ordinary doctor's surgery. However welcoming GPs are, a lot of homeless people feel awkward about going into surgeries. And some people, a small minority, are not suitable for registration with a normal GP. A mother with a baby would not tolerate sitting in a waiting room with someone who has infestations."

Mr Flint (who asked us not to use his real name) now has a room in a hotel near King's Cross and would like to go back to work but cannot do so because of his disability. "They've been very good to me at this clinic," he says. "I once met Michael Heseltine, who told me to take my pension early. But I'm saving that for after I'm 60."

ARTHUR SNELL

Christine Webb looks at

proposed legal changes to help crofters

A new line of trees planted by crofters in the village of Borr, Skye, to provide shelter for their sheep, will soon quell the bitter east winds that whip across the island.

The trees represent the crofters' newfound 'faith' in the future. They became their own landlords in 1993 when they formed the Borr and Arnishader Township Trust, paying £20,000 for 18 crofts and the sites of the dwellings on them. The 49 acres of native trees they have planted are their first investment.

Now the trust has become a model for the largest crofting landlord in Scotland, Michael Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary. He wants to give his 1,400 croft tenants the chance to set themselves free. In some cases he will even give away the crofts.

Crofting is a unique form of land tenure, created in the last century to give smallholders protection after the Highland Clearances. The Crofters Act of 1886 gave crofters security of tenure, the right to hand the land on to heirs and the right to claim compensation from the landlord for improvements made on the land – including dwellings they build.

Further legislation includes the 1976 Act allowing crofters to buy their land for no more than 15 times the rental value. But there is a snag: once they own their land, crofters lose most of their rights, including the right to use common grazing land. By setting up a trust to buy their crofts, then renting the crofts back from the trust, their rights remain.

Mr Forsyth's landholding, mostly in the West Highlands and Western Isles, was ac-



Crofting is meeting a demand from people escaping the cities or returning to their roots

Why they are queueing for a life on Skye

quired mainly by agreement or compulsory purchase allowed by a 1919 Act, which was designed to provide crofts for returning servicemen.

The Transfer of Crofting Estates (Scotland) Bill, about to enter its committee stage in the House of Lords, allows him to offer ownership of crofts to crofters' trusts. It is described by the Crofters' Commission as a "facilitating tool" for those who want to take up the offer to buy.

Moving the Bill's second reading last November, Lord Lindsay, the Scottish Agriculture Minister, said: "With the

best will in the world, officials employed by a government department cannot be as sensitive to local needs and priorities as those who actually live there."

The crofts could be transferred "at no consideration where this is necessary to make sure that the trust gets off to a good start".

Giving land away might appear altruistic, but the Scottish Office gets just £100,000 rent for its 250,000 acres or so of crofting land. The average rent at Borr is £10 a year. This makes crofting such an attractive option that the population of Skye and Lochalsh is

water was excellent and the drainage "absolutely first class", while a manorial domain in the Grafton country came with 6,700 acres and stabling for 35 horses.

A specially commissioned book looks at the future for the countryside a hundred years hence. Predictions include the bizarre calculation that the average £750,000 country house will cost £250 million, assuming inflation.

All forecasters agree that the market is likely to slow in

A lifetime in the Country

tenant, HRH the Comte de Paris. Advertisements reflected the priorities of the time, says the current editor, Clive Aslett. Prospective tenants of a turreted pile outside Blesster were assured that the

What's your house really worth?

PROPERTY PRICES

For the past several weeks, housing "experts", analysts, economists and estate agents have been busy crystal-ball gazing. Rachel Kelly writes. But beware. These housing Mystic Megs are almost totally misleading if their past records are anything to go by.

The latest headline from Savills was that prices would rise by 50 per cent in the next three years. Yet the same agent said that prices would rise by 15 per cent in real terms in 1996, when in fact they rose by about 7 per cent. At the end of 1992, the firm predicted an upturn, three years too early.

One man who deserves to be heard is Simon Agate, chairman of the London agent Winkworth, the only property expert who last year accurately predicted to *The Times* the extent of the boom in property in 1996.

All other forecasters, including the Halifax Building Society, the City broker UBS and other estate agents, underestimated last year's boom, saying rises would reach 2 or 3 per cent.

This year, Mr Agate says that prices are likely to rise by 7 per cent in central London, but by 15 per cent in London's suburbs, including Wandsworth, Streatham, Common, Highbury Fields, Tufnell Park and parts of Highgate and Crouch End.

He believes that the Bill's rights should be extended to privately owned crofts. "Sometimes a croft has more than one croft, leaving him with a surplus house," he says. "The crofter can buy the site the house stands on and sell it on. Such houses can fetch between £50,000 and £90,000."

But he has a word of warning for buyers. "The only cautionary note is that it is not straightforward. Purchasers should ensure that they use a lawyer versed in crofting law. People have bought crofts, thinking they have outright ownership, then realised that the tenant has absolute rights and cannot be removed."

In the London areas, the volume of houses for sale decreased in 1996. Many homeowners decided not to sell before 1997 because they anticipated further price rises. The wide gulf between supply and demand has created artificial price rises," Mr Agate says that the exception in prime central London will be Islington, where houses are historically undervalued. Prices there will rise by 15 per cent.

All forecasters agree that the market is likely to slow in

But Willie Gething, of the buying agency Property Vision, says: "We expect growth to continue over the next 12 months. In real terms, prices are still way below the peak of the late 1980s so there is room for further growth."

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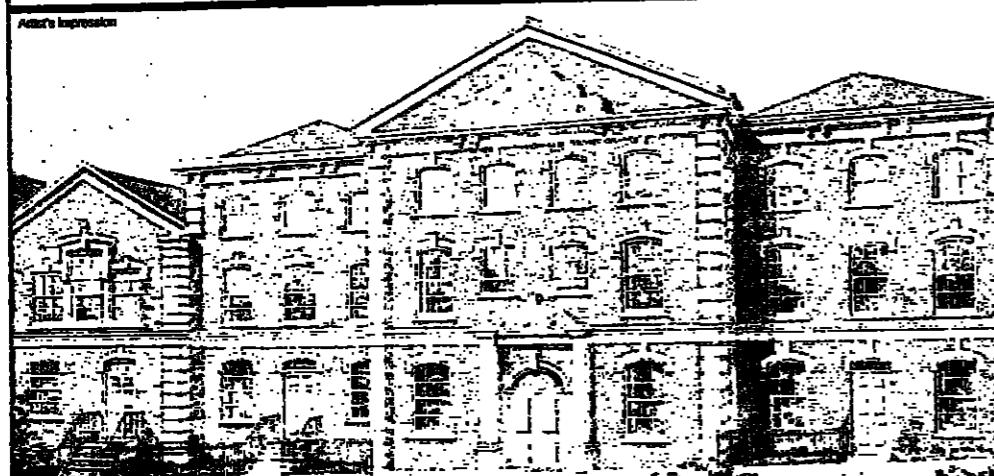
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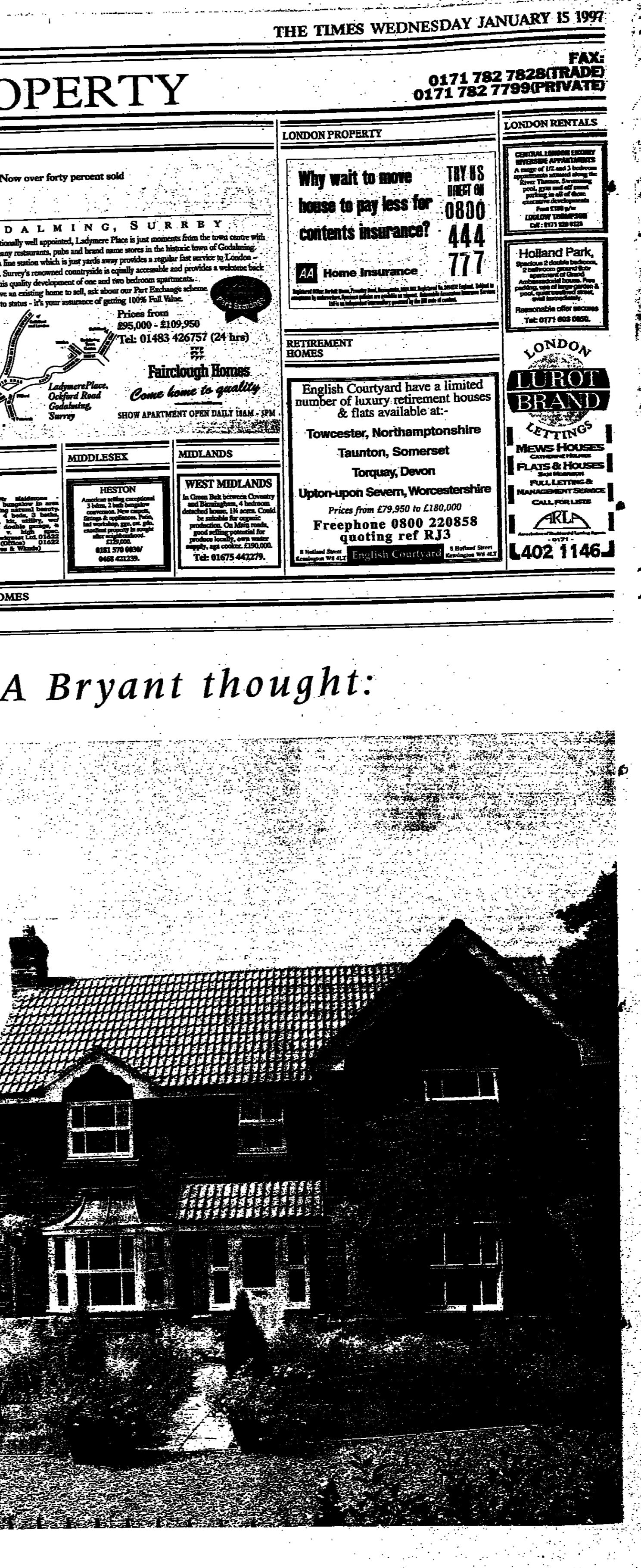
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BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 15 1997

Optimism on rates feeds market fever

BY JANET BUSH, ECONOMICS EDITOR

SHARES raced to a record high yesterday on hopes that the Chancellor, armed with figures showing subdued inflationary pressures and a disappointing Christmas shopping season, will stand firm against calls for higher interest rates when he meets the Bank of England today. The FTSE 100 index of leading shares rallied strongly for the second successive day yesterday, piling on 60.9 points to close at a record 4,168.2. The buying came on renewed optimism about the outlook for base rates. A Reuters poll of 20 economists late last week found that 12 expected interest rates to stay at 6 per cent after today's monthly monetary meeting.

Saints blessed in early trading

BY ALASDAIR MURRAY

THE Saints went marching in to the Stock Exchange yesterday with shares in Southampton Football Club's new holding company rising sharply on the first day's trading. This followed the reverse takeover by Securté Retirement, a property company.

Shares in Secure, now renamed Southampton Leisure Holdings, closed at 150p, having at one stage touched 175p, valuing the club at £40.5 million. Secure shares were suspended at 46p in December to allow the reverse takeover to proceed with the company's original offer valuing the club at £8 million.

The club seeks to raise towards its £35 million stadium, which should be built before the end of the decade. No new money was raised yesterday.

The appointment of Ken Dalglish as Newcastle United manager last night put the flotation of the club back on course. It had intended to launch the float tomorrow but the resignation of Kevin Keegan had put this in doubt.

The club would not comment on the timetable but it is expected to reassure the City of its plans at the earliest opportunity.

Charlton Athletic, the National Division One team, became the latest club to announce its intention to join the stock market. The club is seeking a listing on the Alternative Investment Market, valued at between £10 million and £20 million.

Shareholders in Conrad yesterday agreed the £10 million takeover of Sheffield United. Trading will resume in the company tomorrow at the offer price of 60p with the company seeking to raise £12.5 million from a rights issue.

with eight expecting the Chancellor to concede a quarter-point increase.

Optimism on the outlook for rates was reinforced yesterday by news of a lower than expected rise in American consumer prices, which went some way to allaying fears of rising US interest rates and provoked another rally on Wall Street.

However, the economic news on the eve of today's key monetary meeting did not all go Kenneth Clarke's way with the publication yesterday of a report by the influential Treasury Select Committee that was highly critical of his Budget arithmetic.

The Treasury report served to highlight some of the more optimistic assumptions of the Budget and may strengthen the Bank of England's hand today in looking for a rate increase that it believes must come sooner or later if the Government is to hit its inflation target. A genuinely tight Budget package should, in theory, have lessened the need for a monetary squeeze.

The committee was deeply sceptical about the Government's assumption of low inflation combined with economic growth, its assumption of big savings from its 'Spend to Save' programme of cracking down on benefit fraud, and its forecasts for public spending as a whole.

The report noted that the Government had been able to limit planned public spending in the short term by arranging one-off inflows of money from the sale of Armed Forces' married quarters and the sale of

dent loan book. But this left spending plans more difficult to hit in future years.

Despite the critical tone of this report, the City's attention will be trained on today's monetary meeting. It does not start until mid-afternoon so any change in rates would not be announced until tomorrow.

Whether a rate rise is agreed today, the City is still expecting a modest monetary tightening in the months ahead. Sterling futures traded on the City market are discounting a half-point increase in rates by September.

However, a recent clutch of British data suggest that, while the economy continues to display healthy growth, there is little sign of a consumer boom running out of control, and the news on inflation has been good. This should limit the need for anything but a modest rise in rates in the months ahead.

The most recent survey by the Confederation of British Industry showed that Christmas sales had been disappointing and the British Retail Consortium described the festive shopping season as nail-biting for retailers. The BRC said that price competition was still fierce and that there was no justification for a rise in interest rates.

This came on top of an unexpected decline in British manufacturing output in November as exporters suffered from sterling's strong appreciation, and another set of very subdued producer price figures for December.

Pennington, page 27

National Express chief resigns

BY JASON NISSE

THE chief executive of National Express, the bus company rapidly expanding into railways, airports and motorway services, resigned yesterday after only five months in the post. The departure of Ernest Patterson was put down to 'cultural differences'.

Mr Patterson, who spent 30 years at BET before departing after it was bought by Rentsok, is set to receive a payout of £250,000. He had a similar payoff when he left BET.

His place is taken by Phil White, former head of West Midland Transport, which National Express bought 18 months ago. Mr White was scheduled to become chief executive after the retirement of Ray McEnhill in the summer because of ill-health. But at the last minute, Spencer Stuart, the headhunter, said Mr Patterson was available.

National Express said it that would be contacting Spencer Stuart to see if there would be a refund on the fee paid to find Mr Patterson.

Colin Child, National Express's finance director, denied there had been any disagreement about the group's acquisition strategy. This includes a £70 million from a rights issue.

Pennington, page 27

Patterson: £250,000 payout

Ciro Citterio buttons up Dunn deal

BY JASON NISSE

CIRO CITTERIO, the men's fashion chain, has emerged as the surprise buyer of Dunn & Co, paying £3 million to KPMG, the receiver, for the purveyors of tweed, anoraks and sensible shoes that collapsed owing £6 million a month ago.

Nilesh Thakrar, design director of Ciro Citterio, said that the company intended to run both brands together.

It will turn the 125 Dunn shops over to Ciro Citterio, but keep a Dunn section in them.

Mr Thakrar said: 'We don't want to disappoint our existing Dunn customer base, but we see the generation gap disappearing and older people buying more fashion clothing.'

Ciro Citterio, which is known for suits, jackets and smart casual wear for men under 30, bought Oakland from the receiver of Facia last year and

Horne Brothers in 1993. It is to retain Dunn's 534 staff with the exception of seven in the corporate clothing side, which makes uniforms for the emergency services.

This is being sold separately by KPMG. Paul Jeffery, a partner, said that he had received a great deal of interest in the business.

The takeover is the second rescue for Dunn. It was taken over five years ago by Hodge, a Yorkshire firm, after its

original owner, the Dunn & Co pension fund, faced problems with the company.

The sell-off led to an unpleasant legal action last August when the liquidators of the original company sued the pension fund and its trustees for up to £8 million that it said should have been left in the company.

The business, which has headquarters in Swansea, was originally formed in 1886 by a former Quaker.

Morgan Grenfell suspends Horlick

BY ROBERT MILLER
BUSINESS CORRESPONDENT

FRESH controversy yesterday engulfed Morgan Grenfell, the troubled fund manager owned by Deutsche Bank, when it suspended the head of its £15 billion UK pensions fund business.

The surprise move to suspend Nicola Horlick, 35, pending an internal investigation that will 'look at a potential breach of contract' follows the sacking last September of Peter Young, Morgan Grenfell's star unit trust manager, over trading irregularities in two European funds.

A spokesman for Deutsche Morgan Grenfell said: 'This has nothing to do with the Peter Young affair nor is there any suggestion of financial impropriety.'

It is understood that Ms Horlick, who last year is believed to have earned £1.5 million, was in talks to join ABN Amro. At the weekend, senior managers at Morgan Grenfell are said to have become concerned that up to 12 members of Ms Horlick's team might consider joining her if she were to leave.

ABN Amro, which wants to beef up its asset management arm in London, declined to comment. City insiders believe that while the Dutch bank has held talks with Ms Horlick, who has juggled her high-flying career with looking after a family of five children, no final offer has been made.

Imro, the watchdog for fund managers, is conducting its own investigation into the Peter Young affair, which is also the subject of a Serious Fraud Office probe. Imro said of yesterday's suspension: 'This is unconnected with the Peter Young affair and is not a regulatory matter.'

Ms Horlick's husband Tim left Kleinwort Benson last year to join Salomon Brothers as head of corporate finance and investment banking. Kleinwort initially sought, but later dropped, a court injunction seeking to prevent the departure of key clients and staff.

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES

FTSE 100	4168.2	(+6.0)
Yield	3.75%	
FTSE All share	2042.54	(+24.42)
Nikkei	18092.13	(-25.66)
New York		
Small corporates	6747.57	(+36.45)
S&P Composite	765.68	(+7.17)

US RATE

Federal Funds	5.1%	(5.1%)
Long Bond	9.61%	(9.5%)
Yield	6.75%	(6.88%)

LONDON MONEY

3-month Interbank	6.1%	(6.1%)
One month g/c future (Mar)	10.9%	(10.9%)

STERLING

New York	1.6700*	(1.6755)
London	1.6690	(1.6682)
DM	2.6603	(2.6514)
Fr	5.2677	(5.2652)
SF	1.2977	(1.2963)
Yen	195.05	(194.05)
£ Index	99.5	(99.7)

US\$1 DOLLAR

London	1.5843*	(1.5887)
Paris	5.2303*	(5.2345)
SF	1.2762*	(1.2759)
Yen	116.85*	(116.48)
S Index	99.5	(99.3)

NORTH SEA OIL

Brent 15-day (Mar) \$33.00 (\$33.10)

GOLD

London close \$357.45 (\$359.05)

* denotes midday trading price

Buoyant

Applications to build houses rose 30 per cent in the final quarter of last year according to the National House Building Council, a further sign of a strengthening housing market.

Page 26

Bubbling up

Shares in Matthew Clark, the troubled drinks company, rose 10 per cent yesterday as the stock market reacted favourably to the company's plans for recovery.

Page 27, *Tempus* 28



Nicola Horlick is believed to have held talks with a view to joining ABN Amro

BA confident of American link-up

BY JON ASHWORTH

BOB AYLING, chief executive of British Airways, yesterday insisted the planned alliance with American Airlines would go ahead, in spite of signs of a deepening rift between London and Brussels.

Mr Aylung said Karel van Miert, the European Competition Commissioner, was wrong in suggesting that a combined BA/American would substantially restrict competition between America and the UK. Mr van Miert has outlined his fears in a letter to Ian Lang, the President of the Board of Trade.

His remarks have raised questions about who ultimately will have the say on whether the alliance is approved. Mr van Miert said the European Commission would take Britain to the European Court of Justice if it nodded the deal through. However, under European law, the final say appears to rest with the relevant regulatory authority — in this case, the Department of Trade and Industry, working with the Office of Fair Trading (OFT).

Mr Aylung said BA and American had made it clear that their plans were entirely conditional on a new open

skies agreement between the UK and America. Officials meet in Washington for the next round of talks next month. Interviewed on BBC Radio 4, Mr Aylung said: 'We believe that this agreement will be pro-competitive, will be in the interests of consumers, and will bring much more competition to Heathrow. I remain optimistic that we can get through this and get approval.'

The Commission is

Shopping centre goes to Argent

Argent Group, the property investment company, has exchanged contracts to acquire Crystal Peaks shopping centre from Chesterfield Properties for £35.5 million.

The 300,000-sq ft centre, developed in the late 1980s, serves residential areas south of Sheffield. It includes a Sainsbury food store, 50 shops, a ten-screen cinema, 1,900 parking spaces, health centre and covered market. Norwich Union has agreed to buy a 210,000 sq ft retail warehouse development on adjoining land.

AAA insurer

Scottish Equitable announced record new business figures yesterday, on the day that Standard & Poor's gave it a top AAA rating as a reflection of its integral position within Aegon, the Dutch insurance group. Total new premiums last year rose 41 per cent, to a record £1.42 billion. Total annualised premium income rose 28 per cent to £249.3 million.

ICI splash out

ICI, the chemicals and paints company, is investing £12 million in a new 20 million litre-a-year factory near Chandigarh in northern India to produce paint for the decorative and automotive markets.

Uno profits

Uno, the AIM-listed specialist retailer of upholstered furniture, reported pre-tax profits of £306,000 (£379,000 loss) for the 28 weeks to November 9, before exceptional flotation costs of £817,000. Adjusted earnings were 1.41p a share (2.71p loss), and there is a maiden interim dividend of 1.5p.

Denmans deal

Denmans Electrical, the distributor of electrical products, is negotiating a further acquisition to complete its diversification away from electrical wholesaling. The company reported a fall in pre-tax profits to £2.4 million, from £3 million, in the year to September 30.



Jeff Smith, photographed at AIM Group's factory in Bournemouth yesterday, expects an excellent full-year result

AIM Group goes into treble time

BY RICHARD FOSTER

PROFITS of AIM Group, which designs and makes interiors for aircraft and train coaches, more than trebled to £2.8 million, from £910,000, before tax and exceptional items in the six months to October 31.

Adjusted earnings rose 112 per cent from 7.2p a share to 15.3p and the interim dividend is doubled to 3p a share, from 1.5p.

Turnover increased nearly 50 per cent, from £24.3 million to £36.1 million.

The company has secured a contract for the Nimrod 2000 programme to refurbish 23 aircraft over seven years. Northwest Airlines has also extended its order to 178 aircraft interiors.

Jeff Smith, chairman of AIM, said: "There is every expectation of an excellent full-year result."

Europe's biggest broadcaster born

CLT of Luxembourg, part owner of Channel 5 in Britain, and Bertelsmann of Germany yesterday completed the merger of their television and radio interests, creating Europe's largest broadcaster. The new group, to be called CLT-UFA, will have an annual turnover of about £3.2 billion. The merged company will control 19 TV stations, grouped under the RTL logo, and 23 radio stations, including Talk Radio and Atlantic 252 in Britain, in ten European countries. It will also have a large production and rights business. Its ownership of Channel 5, Britain's last free broadcaster, is part of its strategy of concentrating on advertiser-supported TV.

CLT and Bertelsmann signed an agreement in July to merge their broadcasting interests, but the deal took longer than expected to receive shareholder and regulatory clearance. The new company will be 49 per cent owned by Bertelsmann and 49 per cent owned by Audiofina, which is indirectly controlled by Groupe Bruxelles Lambert and Havas of France. It will have its headquarters in Luxembourg.

Amex to create 150 jobs

AMERICAN EXPRESS, the financial services company, is creating 150 jobs in Newcastle-upon-Tyne at a new European call-centre serving card members in Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Switzerland and Britain. American Express has outsourced the call-centre operation to Matrix Marketing, a subsidiary of Cincinnati Bell Inc. Companies with existing telebusiness centres in Newcastle include the Automobile Association and British Airways.

Stake sale aids Birkby

PROFITS of Birkby Group rose to £6.3 million for the half year to September 30, helped by the company's disposal of its stake in Hill Hire, which raised £1.2 million. Excluding the exceptional profit, the workspace management company's pre-tax profit rose by 19 per cent, from £3.82 million to £4.54 million. Earnings per share before the exceptional profit rose by 17.5 per cent, from 6.3p to 7.4p. The interim dividend is up from 2.2p to 2.3p. Proceeds of the Hill Hire stake sale were used to buy British Coal Enterprise, adding 1.5 million square feet.

Limit capacity at £644m

THE London Insurance Market Investment Trust (Limit), the largest Lloyd's corporate capital vehicle, has announced underwriting capacity of £644 million for 1997. Limit has allocated capacity to 84 syndicates managed by 35 managing agency groups, compared with 95 syndicates managed by 36 managing agents in 1996. Direct capacity attributable to Limit shareholders is £615 million. The net tangible asset value at December 31, last year, was £20.4p (£18.9p) per share. The shares were unchanged at 129p.

Atlantic Telecom up

ATLANTIC TELECOM, Britain's first quoted wireless telephony company, said it has gained almost 1,600 residential and business customers twice as many as it had forecast, in its first two months of commercial operation and expects to break even in two or three years. Atlantic reported an operating loss of £217,000 in the half year to September 30, against a loss of £440,000 previously, on turnover of £3.76 million. A one-off gain of £541,000 on the sale of Coventry Cable produced pre-tax profits of £300,000 (£397,000 loss). *Tempus*, page 28

Provision hurts VHE

VHE Holdings, the land regeneration and reclamation company, suffered a fall in pre-tax profits to £1 million, from £1.2 million, in the half-year to September 30. The decrease comes after a £500,000 provision against a dismantling contract that was adversely affected by a fall in steel prices. Earnings fell to 2.1p a share, from 2.5p. Turnover rose to £20.1 million, from £17.2 million. Again there is no interim dividend but the company said that it would resume dividend payments at the time of the full-year results.

Bucknall pays out again

BUCKNALL GROUP, the facilities management and business services company, is resuming dividend payments after a six-year absence. Shareholders are to get a 0.25p a share interim dividend after the company achieved a 36 per cent rise in profits to £354,000 in the half year ended October 31. Earnings were 20 per cent higher at 1.2p. The shares rose 1p to 52p. Richard Miles, the chairman, said that the company had made considerable progress in markets that were only slightly improved.

Growth in housebuilding reflects market confidence

BY CHRISTINE BUCKLEY, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

FURTHER strength in the housing market was signalled yesterday after a jump in the number of applications to build houses. The increase coincides with growth in the buying power of first-time buyers.

In the final quarter of last year applications to build

homes rose 30 per cent over the same period of 1995 to 37,000, according to the National House-Building Council. Private-sector applications, excluding housing associations, showed a greater jump in activity with a 40 per cent increase in the last three

months of 1996 to 33,000. The NHBC, which registers applications for new homes, also recorded an increase in average daily sales of new houses. They rose 5 per cent in the last quarter of 1996 on the previous year's rate. Some 43,000 homes were completed

in the final three months of last year, a 7 per cent rise.

First-time buyers have more cash to buy homes than at any time since the early 1970s, according to an index on first-time buyers' ability to buy produced by the NHBC. The index, based on average earn-

ings, required deposits and house prices, stood at 122 points — a slight increase on the previous quarter. Under the index, the higher the points, the more affordable are new homes. It breached 120 in 1995, while, in 1988, the height of the last housing boom, it stood at 77.

Basil Bean, chief executive of the NHBC, said: "The pick-up in levels of UK housebuilding activity is very encouraging and provides further evidence of recovery in the housing market. Thanks to improving levels of consumer confidence, the lowest mortgage interest rates for more than 20 years and record levels of new home affordability, the prospects for sustained growth in the new housing market over the coming year are now the best for some time."

But Mr Bean gave warning that the industry needed to see another year of growth before the housing recession could be declared at an end.

Tempus, page 28

Tarmac sees international gloom

BY OLIVER AUGUST

A TRADING statement by Tarmac, one of the UK's leading construction groups, bodes ill for the building sector in Europe and America.

Tarmac, of which Neville Simms is chief executive, expects only stabilisation or small growth in 1997, and the more buoyant US market is predicted to level off. Germany's construction sector in particular was hit by "continued weakness in the market".

The heavy building materials divisions were hit hardest by the absence of a full construction recovery. In the UK, the low demand reported

at the interim stage continued, and quarry product sales volumes for the year fell by between 5 and 16 per cent. In North America, overall sales volumes for 1996 rose by 1 per cent, but local price increases hit market share in certain areas. Of other overseas activities, France in particular was hit by "continued weakness in the market".

Tarmac's financial position

was reported to have improved, with net debt reduced

thanks to disposals in Ameri-

can quarrying activities.

Simms: low demand in UK



Simms: low demand in UK

Departures setback for GGT deal

BY JASON NISSE

GGT GROUPS planned £105 million purchase of French advertising agency group BDDP has been dealt another setback by the resignations of two of the most senior executives of the French agency.

Jean-Michel Carlo, one of the partners in BDDP, has told colleagues that he is leaving. He has been asked by BDDP not to join any rival firm until April 1, when GGT's £55 million rights issue to fund the deal should be completed.

Natalie Rastoin, the general manager of BDDP in Paris, has told the company she is also going and will join Ogilvy & Mather, the agency owned by BDDP. GGT hopes to reveal the terms of the BDDP deal by February.

The departures come on top of the loss of \$50 million of business from Ford, the motor company, by Wells Rich Greene, the US agency owned by BDDP. GGT hopes to

reveal the terms of the BDDP deal by February.

The company was closed

down last April by the Department of Trade and Industry.

Backing for ostrich rescue

BY MARIANNE CURPHEY

INVESTORS who lost money when an ostrich farming company collapsed have backed a "rescue plan" that has meant them contributing more cash.

To take part, people had to put up at least 13 per cent of their original investment and hand over ownership of their birds, which are kept on farms in Belgium.

A total of £1.5 million needed to be raised by last Friday in order for the launch of a new ostrich farming company, called Belaurostru, to go ahead. The deadline has now

been extended to January 20 in order to enable overseas investors to raise the cash in time.

Belaurostru is backed by some of the original investors in the crashed Ostrich Farming Corporation. About 2,700 people put nearly £22 million into the OFC.

The company was closed

down last April by the Department of Trade and Industry.

TOURIST RATES

	Bank Buys	Bank Sales		Bank Buys	Bank Sales
Australia \$	2.24	2.08	Malta	0.650	0.585
Austria Sch	19.65	18.15	Netherlands Gld	3.128	2.888
Belgium Fr	37.75	35.20	New Zealand \$	2.35	2.31
Denmark Kr	2.361	2.201	Norway Kr	1.22	1.12
Cyprus Cyp	0.829	0.774	Portugal Esc	275.50	257.00
Danmark Kr	10.28	9.68	S Africa Rand	8.38	7.58
Finland Fr	0.58	0.52	S Africa Rand	220.00	210.00
France Fr	9.36	8.71	Sweden Kr	12.25	11.45
Germany Dm	2.61	2.60	Switzerland Fr	2.43	2.25
Hong Kong \$	4.02	4.07	UK £	19.00	18.00
Iceland	13.57	12.57	USA \$	1.70	1.840
Ireland £	1.20	1.00	Rates for small denominations bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank PLC. Different rates apply to traveller's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.		
Italy Lira	5.74	5.54			
Japan Yen	208.60	192.60			

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Administrator appointed by the

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The Company was

Some impertinent advice for the Chancellor □ National Express drops the pilot □ Gap in pensions regulator's armoury

ONE of the pleasures of writing a column like this is the occasional offer of impertinent advice to those who know better, such as the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Kenneth Clarke might bear in mind the following as he goes into bat this morning against the Bank of England.

The Bank is not terribly concerned, it seems, about the rise in sterling. Markets go up and down, old boy, and the pound can fall back again at any time. A strong currency does not necessarily translate into lower prices on the high street, particularly if there is lots of consumer demand in the economy.

But the key question is just how much demand there really is out there. For every teenage scribbler who lived through the ageing process of the late 1980s and is convinced that another inflationary boom and bust is just around the corner, there is a piece of evidence that suggests the opposite. Here are a few:

• For all the hopeful headlines and pretty shopping pictures on newspaper front pages, the actual evidence suggests that Christmas on the high street was disappointing. The CBI's report showed sales volumes well short of readers' expectations; the British Retail Consortium reported a "nail-biting" time for its members.

• There is much talk about

No demand for dearer money

rising pay, but underlying trends in personal incomes are not nearly as strong as headline figures suggest. David Owen, of Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, points out that annual real personal disposable income growth of 4.6 per cent in the third quarter of last year, the strongest rise since 1988, was distorted by the inclusion of income flowing into pension funds and life assurance companies.

This income includes dividends, net interest and rental income as well as the fruits of share buybacks and special dividends. None of this is about to be spent on the high street.

• Despite the hype surrounding windfalls from building society mergers and conversions, evidence derived from the two handouts already made suggests that little of the money has actually been spent. A survey by Niko Europe found that two thirds of the windfalls to come are likely to be saved.

• Consumers are not going to get a big boost from higher wages. The latest figures from Incomes and Data Services suggest that pay settlements have

fallen back below 3.5 per cent for the first time since 1995.

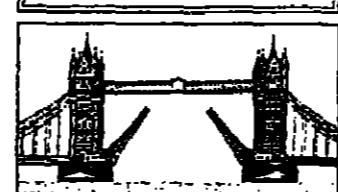
None of this rules out a quarter-point rise this week or next month. What it does suggest, and this is far more important, is that the variation in interest rates in the current cycle might be slight.

Base rates troughed at 5.25 per cent in February 1994. The life futures market is currently pricing in a half point rise in base rates by September and another half point over the next year, still leaving rates at 7 per cent. But if the latest evidence is anything to go by, even that may be too pessimistic.

Driving down a dead end?

• It is an invariable rule in corporate life that if a company admits an offence, it is guilty of far worse. National Express admits to having chosen the wrong man as chief executive five months ago but claims that there was no boardroom bust-up; ergo, there must have been tears and tantrums all round.

PENNINGTON



dreams had to be reined in by more sober executives. Tempting, but this would preclude any further ambitious moves such as the purchase of Welcome Break or Birmingham Airport.

Instead, Mr Patterson is being painted as a stick-in-the-mud who stood against an exciting future, "Mr Obscurity", to use his stock market nickname, whose departure after five months is no great loss. Also dangerous: he becomes the experienced man brought in from outside who suggested a foot on the brakes rather than the purchase of anything visible from the coach window.

If you buy expertise, you need a compelling reason to ignore it. If National Express does decide to venture beyond its core coach and rail business and live to regret it, directors cannot claim they have not been warned.

Mr Patterson acquired an appreciation of the benefits of caution, along with his first big salary pay-off, at BET, a company that was humbled by unwise and hasty diversification. There is already a long list of privatised concerns who have

expanded beyond their area of competence. There must now be a serious danger of National Express joining that list.

Whistling in the dark

• THE Pensions Act was meant to make as sure as practicable that there was no repeat of the Robert Maxwell affair or the many other abuses that did not make enough headlines to stir Parliament into action. The new regime was symbolically inaugurated when John Hayes rang the curtain up on the Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority. But some change may be more symbolic than real.

Mr Hayes deserves the good wishes of all pension fund members. To achieve his ends, he also needs to be feared by those tempted into fraud and malpractice. Fraud is usually triggered by a Maxwell-style cash crisis. Preventive measures are more likely to work than deterrents. Malpractice often arises when greed overcomes directors during

the course of bids, deals and restructurings.

In each case, a regulator needs to know what is going on. Mr Hayes will have to rely on whistleblowers such as auditors and trustees, because forcing 200,000 schemes to make regular returns to his office would be bureaucratic, costly and might discourage employers from providing their own schemes. On the other hand, it might have encouraged the closure of more than 100,000 tiny registered schemes that are most open to secret manipulation and should probably not exist.

Building brands

• RESEARCH from Dresdner Kleinwort Benson suggests that most building societies are not worth much. The broker hired Interbrand to value the names of mortgage lenders, and found that brands such as Alliance & Leicester and Northern Rock do little to attract custom. The big brands such as Halifax and Abbey National are useful because they are attached to huge retail chains. Loyalty counts for nothing, and price, and the lowest rate you can offer, is all. Follow this through to its logical conclusion, and the average small society seeking to convert to plc status can expect one fate: extinction by takeover.



Peter Aikens, right, Matthew Clark chief executive, and Hugh Etheridge, finance director, toast the share price rise

Matthew Clark shares lifted by recovery plan

BY ALASDAIR MURRAY

SHARES of Matthew Clark, the troubled drinks company, rose 10 per cent yesterday as the City reacted positively to recovery plans.

Matthew Clark shares plummeted nearly 60 per cent in the autumn after the company blamed alcopops for a huge fall in the sales of its premium packaged brands, which include Diamond White and K Cider. Shares in the company closed at 33p yesterday, up 29p, compared with a high of 80p last year.

Peter Aikens, chief executive, admitted that the impact of the arrival of alcopops was misjudged, although he said the company is now confident of restoring its growth pros-

pects over the medium term. It estimates that lost sales, combined with a fierce price war, will cost around £22 million in lost profits this year. The company is responding with a fourfold increase in its advertising expenditure, to around £10 million, and it expects to maintain its final dividend at 24p a share.

The drinks company said that it had introduced price increases last week, the first for four years, and was confident that the rest of the sector would follow its lead. Matthew Clark is also about to launch Blackthorn Gold, the first smoothflow cider, backed by substantial advertising. Pre-tax profits for the six

months to October 31 rose 40 per cent, to £21.6 million, on an overall turnover of £293 million, an increase of 68 per cent. But earnings per share fell 26 per cent, to 16.8p, because of the diluting impact of the acquisition of Taunton Cider last November.

The branded drinks division increased profits by 48 per cent, to £20.9 million. The company said that sales of its Diamond White and K brands had fallen by around 30 per cent since the summer and profits had suffered by around £11 million as a consequence. The intense price competition, resulting in a fall in off-trade margins had also had a £4 million negative impact.

Tempus, page 28

Hodder Headline publishes 9% gain

BY SARAH CUNNINGHAM

THE bestselling talents of John le Carré, Stephen King and Kenny Dalglish gave a lift to sales at Hodder Headline, one of the UK's largest book publishers, in the final quarter of last year.

In the 12 months to December 31, the company's like-for-like sales grew 9 per cent, while in the last quarter they were ahead 12 per cent.

Turi Hely Hutchinson, chief executive, said that trading benefited from "outstanding sales" of such hardback

Recovery prompts big bonus payout at DTC

BY ROBERT MILLER

STAFF at Debenham Tewson & Chinnock (DTC), the quoted commercial property agent and chartered surveyor, are set to receive hefty year-end bonuses after a near-100 per cent jump, to £1.86 million, in half-year pre-tax profits.

Richard Lay, chairman, said: "If our current levels of profitability are maintained for the year, our staff costs will rise to take account of our bonus scheme." Earnings rose around £93 million (£59 million). Preliminary results will be released in March.

Tempus, page 28

Passenger surge boosts BAA

BY CARL MORTISHED

TRAFFIC through BAA's airports surged 7.8 per cent in December, with strong growth at Gatwick and on North Atlantic routes.

The group had a record year, with 96.3 million passengers passing through its gates in 1996, up 5.5 per cent on the previous year. BAA shares rose 18p to 503p.

Traffic to the Irish Republic showed the strongest growth, up 12.6 per cent on last year. North Atlantic traffic grew 7.4 per cent and other long-haul passengers rose 9 per cent.

European charter traffic now accounted for only a third of

passenger traffic at Gatwick, which is finding increasing acceptance as a second international hub alongside Heathrow.

Gatwick remained the fastest growing airport in the group with a 24 per cent increase in traffic in the year to 4.8 million passengers.

BAA's Scottish airports showed strong growth in December, with Edinburgh and Aberdeen increasing passenger volumes by more than 12 per cent.

Tempus, page 28

Ashquay beaten by deadline

BY FRASER NELSON

ASHQUAY, the property group, has lost its £21 million takeover bid for the rival UK Estates after its last-minute share buys missed registration by Monday's deadline.

The hostile bidder said yesterday that it had won only 45.8 per cent of UK Estates, leaving it 4.2 per cent short of victory. It succeeded in buying the outstanding shares in the market by 12.58pm on Monday, but the transfer did not reach the registrar in time for the 1pm deadline, so the bid failed. Ashquay said an earlier hitch in the Crest settlement system also hindered it.

Ashquay is left with £1 million expenses and a loss of £133,000 on its shares in UK Estates, down 5p, to 25.5p. Ashquay eased 3p, to 37p.

Opra gets tough on infringements

BY ROBERT MILLER

TOUGH new guidelines on whistleblowing by City pension fund professionals who

guard some £600 billion of assets are expected to be unveiled by the new pensions watchdog (see Pennington, this page).

John Hayes, chairman of the Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority (Opra), a statutory body established under the 1995 Pensions Act, plans to issue a consultative document ahead of final rules being in place by April 6. From that date professionals such as auditors and accountants will have a legal obligation to report any suspected infringements in the 200,000 occupational pension plans registered with Opra.

Mr Hayes said: "The guidelines will issue for consultation make it clear that professionals involved with occupa-

tional pension schemes have a duty to blow the whistle on any possible infringement."

The watchdog, who has the power to fine companies up to £50,000 and individuals up to £5,000, added: "I want to make clear that if someone makes a genuine mistake and owns up to it and we can sort it out properly we are not necessarily talking about fines."

However, if dishonesty and deception are involved we will act swiftly and decisively. We do have civil powers to secure pension fund assets."

Also coming into force this year are new rules on member trustees being appointed to company or occupational schemes. Mr Hayes said lay trustees had nothing to fear as long as they exercised normal caution and diligence.

City Diary, page 29

Project delay hits Babcock

BY MARTIN BARROW

BABCOCK International, the engineering group, said sales revenue in the year to March 31, 1998 would be reduced by about £8 million due to the further deferral of the Hanson-SCM Kemerton project, for which the group's process division had a major engineering services role.

Babcock said that its process division had recently won a £10 million lump sum contract in connection with a new chromic acid plant to be built at Teesside which would partly compensate for the loss on the project at Hanson's titanium dioxide plant in Kemerton, Australia. Babcock shares fell 4p to 71p.

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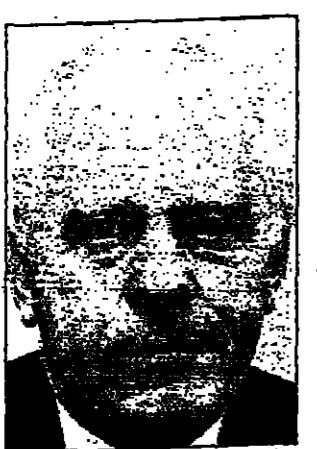
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STOCK MARKET



MICHAEL CLARK

Steel shares buckle as the pound's rise hits profits

AS THE rest of the stock market soared to its highest level ever, shares of British Steel were plumbing the depths.

The price ended 52p down at a new low of 146½p ahead of a presentation for brokers in London last night at which it was hoped the group would shed further light on damage that the strong pound was inflicting on profits.

Only a few weeks ago the company indicated that the strong pound was playing havoc with its ability to compete, providing the signal for a series of savage profit downgrades.

Brokers that had been looking for profits at the pre-tax level of £650 million for the year to March 1998 cut their forecasts to £350 million. That compares with estimates for the current year of £550 million. Last year the group made profits of more than £1 billion.

One company which has suffered from falling steel prices is VHE Holdings, which specialises in the re-use of land and is headed by Brian Waldron, chairman, with Brian Thomson, managing director. The company saw profits slide in the first half after the price of one of its dismantling contracts was adversely affected in between tendering for the work and completing the project. It finished 1½p cheaper at 85p.

The rest of the equity market continued to race ahead amid growing hopes that the Chancellor will be able to stave off another rise in interest rates at his meeting with the Governor of the Bank of England today.

Stock shortages and a positive start to trading on Wall Street enabled prices to close at their best of the day. The FTSE 100 index surged 60.9 to close at an all-time high of 4,162.8, stretching the gains for the past two days to 11.6. Total turnover reached a healthy one billion shares.

The best gains were seen among financials, where stock shortages were acute. Double-digit gains were seen in the banks where National Westminster leapt 24½p to 785p. Barclays 20p to 1,111. HSBC 32½p to 1,135. Lloyds TSB 22½p to 490p. Abbey National 27p to 800p. Bank of Scotland 15p to 323p. Royal Bank of Scotland 14p to 582p, and Standard Chartered 18p to 711½p.

The composite insurers had



Brian Waldron, left, and Brian Thomson of VHE, down 1½p

that old takeover favourite Commercial Union 21p better at 791½p. General Accident 11½p to 796p, and Royal Sun Alliance 10½p at 452½p. The life insurers also had Britain's 17½p better at 782½p. London & Manchester Group 6½p at 427½p. Prudential 23p at 537p, and United Assurance 14p at 517½p. BAT Industries, with strong inter-

performances in the run-up to Christmas, Morgan Stanley, the US securities house, and rival NatWest Securities were both pushing the supermarket chains to clients. NatWest is particularly keen on Somerfield up 6½p at 171p ahead of maiden interim figures next week. Others to benefit were Asda, up 4½p to 129p, Kwik Save 10p to 332½p to

Charles Sidney, the Bradford-based Mercedes vehicle distributor, is making up lost ground, its share price gaining a further 1½p to 91½p, compared with a 1996 peak of 107p. Whispers in the market claim a bid of 120p a share may be on the table. This would give the group a price tag of almost £50 million.

ests in the financial sector, rose 21p to 493½p, while Mercury Asset Management put 36½p at £12.57½.

BT climbed 9p to 414½p as UBS, the broker, upgraded its holding to a "buy". Almost 21 million shares had changed hands by the close.

The food retailers benefited as investors began switching out of the general retailers at 382½p earlier in the week. Secure Retirement, subject of

an upbeat statement to shareholders at the annual meeting lifted McCarthy & Stone 6p to 114½p.

□ GILT-EDGED: The London bond market recovered from some early falls on the back of strong mark-up among US Treasury bonds.

The March series of the long gilt finished £16 higher at £109½, after touching a low of £109½.

Treasury 8 per cent 2021 rose 1½p to £103½, but shorter dated issues were subdued ahead of today's monthly economic meeting. Treasury 6 per cent 1999 was one tick lower at 98½.

□ NEW YORK: Wall Street stocks showed solid gains in early trading. At midday, the Dow Jones industrial average was up 38.49 points at 6,747.67.

Source: Delcam

Wm Morrison, 7p to 160p, Safeway, 13½p to 426½p, and J Sainsbury, 11p to 401½p.

Courtaulds, the chemicals distributor, fell 6p to 377p after a large line of stock went through the market as part of a protected trade. Brokers say 107.8 million shares were placed with institutions at 382½p earlier in the week. Secure Retirement, subject of

an upbeat statement to shareholders at the annual meeting lifted McCarthy & Stone 6p to 114½p.

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BT: RINGING ALL THE RIGHT NUMBERS

BRITISH TELECOM share price

FT-SE all-share index (rebased)

Source: Delcam

RENTERS (100)

ROBUST COFFEE (6)

WHITE SUGAR (FOB)

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THE
TIMESCITY
DIARYAdvertisement's
potent brew

SCOTTISH COURAGE will need to live up to its name. The brewery is in trouble after the Advertising Standards Authority upheld complaints from the European Commission, the European Movement and an MEP that its national advertising campaign was misleading.

The tongue-in-cheek advertisement featured Brussels sprouts arranged in a circle, underneath the headline 'Keep them out of our BIER'. It read: 'Things used to be so simple... But now we have Brussels. Well-meaning chaps, but perhaps little zealots... They're even looking at the merits of standardising the way we brew our beer... Your Beck's is not your Beck's... Because in their infinite wisdom Brussels has decreed that all beer must now be brewed with an inferior standardised water.' According to the ASA, the advertisement, distorted the present position. Not to mention the political balance'.

Hot water?

ROBERT FARRELL the Merrill Lynch investment guru is not afraid to put his dignity where his money is. To illustrate his view that the US market is overheating, fund managers were yesterday presented with a picture of a nearly naked Farrell emerging from a hot tub in a boat on the Thames. 'It's a sign of the top of the market; not the bottom, or I would have turned around,' he beamed.



DAVID 'Eager' Beever just can't be stopped. The recently appointed chairman of KPMG Corporate Finance was yesterday made a non-executive director at TIS, the vehicle rental company. Peter Roberts, TIS group chief executive, and Beever go back a long way — they share a passion for beer.

Seeking funds

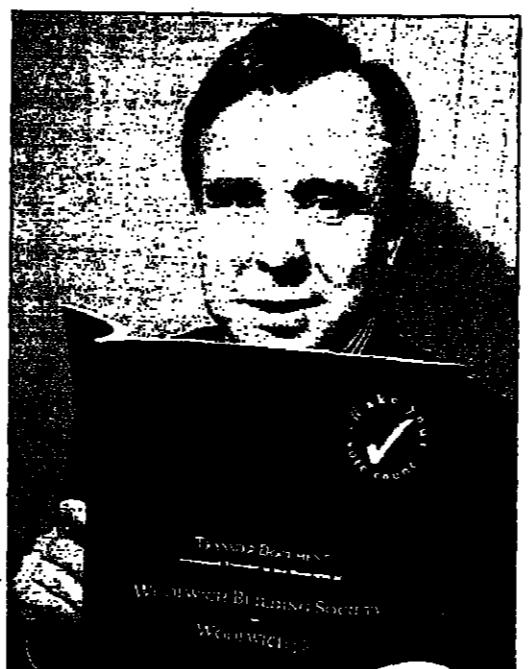
WHISTLEBLOWING by City pension fund professionals such as auditors and accountants may well be *de rigueur*. But where does the average employee go? Public Concern at Work, the independent charity based in London, may be the answer. In three years it has received 4,000 inquiries on such issues as company fraud and public safety. Now the charity has run out of funding and needs a new sponsor to replace the Barings Foundation.

Price in touch

NEWS of Singer & Friedlander's decision to team up with former footballer Alan Hansen is of little interest to Charles Price. The recently appointed head of S&F's banking and treasury divisions has thoughts only for rugby: he coaches a team of under 19s in Woodford. Price's move from NM Rothschild & Sons coincides with a successful spate on the rugby field. Last weekend his lads won the first round of the Essex Cup.

AN unfortunate gaffe for Leeds Group. In its directors' report, the textile group refers to 'excessive' dates of options outstanding at the end of the year. Most unpleasant.

MORAG PRESTON



Mutual with muscle aims to be bank with big ideas

Marianne Curphey on the flotation of the Halifax and fellow building societies

In a matter of months, the Halifax Building Society will be transformed from a 145-year-old sleepy mutual into a high-profile FT-SE company. It will face the scrutiny of stock market accounting. As it prepares for the conversion, its eight million borrowers and savers will be receiving a transfer document outlining the details of flotation and how much each can expect to receive in free shares.

Halifax is coming to the stock market with £3 billion of surplus capital to spend. It has a long shopping list and its track record and reputation in the City give it the muscle to make some big acquisitions. On its list will be life and general insurance businesses, plus leasing and treasury. The latter two operations have been lucrative for another building society turned bank, the Abbey National.

On the insurance side, Halifax is at present digesting its acquisition of Clerical, the life mutual. But the purchase has not satisfied the society's appetite for a bigger chunk of the long-term savings market and Halifax is watching closely the remaining annual insurers, among them Friends Provident, Scottish Widows, Scottish Amicable, Standard Life, Scottish Provident, NPI and Scottish Life.

With a right issue, even a major insurance player such as Commercial Union (currently worth £4.7 billion and rumoured to have considered a tie-up with BAT Industries) would not be beyond Halifax's grasp. Alternatively, buying solid composite insurers such as General Accident, worth £2.7 billion, or Legal & General could prove fruitful for both parties.

Halifax is regarded in the Square Mile as the best managed and most tightly run building society and has come top of UBS's league table for its financial performance for the past two years. It is big enough to buy an insurer and keep the brand name and current management — two important considerations for the board of any mutual it approaches.

Its fellow building societies that also plan flotation this summer — Alliance & Leicester and Woolwich — are unlikely to offer similar benefits. Both have been struggling to form alliances in the run-up to flotation, but approaches to smaller building societies and mutual insurers have been rebuffed so far.

Alliance & Leicester, where Peter White is chief executive, is rumoured to be interested in acquiring the Bradford & Bingley Building Society, which so far has declared itself strongly mutual, plus a mutual insurer, perhaps Friends Provident, Scottish Provident, or Scottish Widows. But its aggressive reputation has frightened off some potential partners, and it is generally perceived to be too small to be attractive. A

merger or takeover involving the Woolwich, where John Stewart is chief executive, and another society would almost certainly lead to job losses, loss of the mutual's brand name and board, and the closure of one head office.

The alternative, a hostile bid, would require the A&L to appeal directly to the members of the building society it had set its sights on via the national press. Such a strategy worked for the Abbey National as it prepared to acquire the National & Provincial Building Society, but such tactics are expensive and do not always work. In addition, although championing the benefits of mutuality only weeks before it fell into the arms of Abbey, the N&P was widely regarded in the City as being effectively up for sale.

A similar problem afflicts the Woolwich. It is not big enough to be an attractive parent to a smaller mutual, but does face the prospect of being taken over by a bigger company. Talks with the Prudential, the UK's biggest name in life and pensions, appear to have founded, but new legislation in the Building Societies Bill may make Woolwich and A&L more vulnerable.

At present, building societies that convert to banks are protected from hostile bids for five years. The Bill proposes that protection be removed if they make hostile bids for other companies in the financial services field. They are protected if they grow only through friendly

mergers. In addition, under the proposed legislation, a shareholder in the newly floated society can build up a 10 per cent stake and then call a special general meeting at which it can ask other shareholders to vote to veto the five-year protection rule. If they agree, the 10 per cent shareholder can then launch its own takeover bid. This could therefore lay converting societies open to hostile bids.

However, the Woolwich and A&L may feel that with the prospect of a general election in May, the Conservatives have more pressing issues than the intricacies of building society legislation and the Bill has no parliamentary slot. Alternatively, they may find white knights to be friendly partners before they become quoted.

The market will be dominated this year by the three floats, estimated to be worth more than £17 billion. A&L is expected to come to market in late April or May and the Woolwich in July. The Halifax, which has taken more than two-and-a-half years to come to market, will convert in June, subject to confirmation by the Building Societies Commission and other approvals.

A fourth, smaller player, is also planning flotation, Northern Rock, of which Robert Dickinson is chairman. It has a distinctly northern and more cautious client base. It has indicated that it does not share the ambitions of the other three to become huge



Top team at the Halifax from left, Mike Blackburn, chief executive, Jon Founds, chairman, and Roger Boyes, the finance director

Philip Bassett examines the trend in unemployment figures

Will falling jobless work for Major?

Last month's enormous 95,800 drop in unemployment took seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment in the UK to below two million for the first time since February 1991. At that time, John Major had been Prime Minister for just three months. Now, almost six years later, with unemployment back below the key two million threshold, Mr Major may be out of office within months.

Since unemployment was last at two million, the claimant count rose to a peak of 2.98 million in December 1992. Barring a few blips, it has fallen steadily since then. Or at least it has on current figures: one of the peculiarities of the 'seasonal adjustment' process used by the Office for National Statistics is the annual backward revision of the figures, due to take place again in April, which has an irritating tendency to shift turning points as new statistical evidence is applied.

The general trend of unemployment is and has been clearly down. Not only is unemployment down below the two million mark, it is now more than one million down from its peak. But unemployment is still stubbornly

higher for men than for women. Last month there were 1.47 million men out of work, a rate of 9.4 per cent, compared with 459,000 women, at 3.7 per cent.

According to the most recent available figures, unemployment among young men and young women aged 18 to 24 has fallen almost exactly the same rate. But the gap widens among people aged 25 to 49, with an 8.6 per cent fall for men compared with a 15.6 per cent drop among women. In

more peripheral regions, it is down 16.3 per cent in the South East, 16.7 per cent in the South West and 15.4 and 16 per cent in the West and East Midlands respectively. At the same time, it has fallen 9.9 per cent in Wales and 7.2 per cent in Scotland.

But the pattern is far from clear. The North, for instance, has seen a fall of 15.5 per cent, while the 11.9 per cent drop in Northern Ireland has taken its overall unemployment rate to below 10 per cent for the first time since the early 1980s.

On average, unemployment is lower in Labour areas than in Conservative constituencies. In Conservative

constituencies, unemployment is on average 3.372, compared with 2.570 in Labour seats and 1.277 in those held by the Lib Dems.

But unemployment is now falling about half as fast again in Conservative seats as in Labour seats. In the 12 months to October, Conservative unemployment fell by 12.700 and Labour's by about 98,600 — a decline in Conservative areas of 13 per cent, compared with 9 per cent in Labour areas.

Business leaders at the CBI suggest that unemployment will drop to 1.7 million by the end of next year

the 50-plus age group, the rate of fall among men, at 19.3 per cent, is close to double the female fall of 10.9 per cent. Even so, unemployment rates vary markedly by age: 14.9 per cent for people aged 18 to 19, 6.5 per cent for the 30 to 39 age group and 1.4 per cent among the over 60s.

In the main, over the past year, unemployment has fallen more rapidly in the more prosperous areas of the Midlands and the South than in the

previously non-manual employees — the victims of the so-called white-collar recession of the early 1990s — is now falling faster than among previous blue-collar workers, with those formerly in professional jobs (especially women) seeing marked falls in unemployment, as well as those in sales jobs.

Looking ahead, the fall in unemployment is generally forecast to continue. The Government made underlying assumptions in the Budget about continuing falls in unemployment, while in their latest economic forecast, business leaders at the Confederation of British Industry are suggesting unemployment will drop to 1.7 million by the end of next year, and to 1.6 million the year after.

With an eye on key economic competitors such as Germany, where unemployment has just passed through the four million mark and is set to rise further, ministers take comfort from such forecasts. John Taylor, Trade and Industry Minister with responsibility for employment relations, says that the number of jobs in the labour market will grow — and "it is through the availability of jobs in the market that security will be obtained".



ANTHONY
HARRIS

EMU: looking for hidden agendas

"It now seems likely that we will never again see interest rates raised by the Bundesbank or by the Bank of France. These economies are so far lagging the cycle that the next rise could be left to the proposed European Central Bank."

Obvious, when you think of it, but this suggestion from David Hale does remind us how near the future is getting, and how severe the birth pangs it has already provoked. Are they bearable? Hale begs that question, but this column need not. Can we, in short, still take it for granted the EMU will be hatched on time?

By no means, in the judgment of Stephen Lewis of London Bond Brokers who seems to find new grounds for scepticism at least once a week. I have resented quoting him on this subject: it might look like wishful thinking; but now he has come up with two statements that surely deserve wider notice. One is from Gerrit Zalm, the Dutch finance minister, who argues that convergence ought not to mean just meeting targets on an arbitrary date, but doing so as a matter of natural routine, not contrivance. The other is from Robert Camdesus, until recently managing director of the IMF, who says that countries that submit themselves to EMU disciplines before that are truly ready will injure not only the system, but themselves.

Now it is true that Zalm does not speak for Germany, and Camdesus only for himself; but The Netherlands is always privy to German thoughts, and M Camdesus is a senior member, emeritus, of the French establishment. They look, in short, like two distinguished stallions. Both their speeches might be translated, crudely, as "No Latins here". But that risks provoking a split in the EU; and is that all they mean? Both speeches might also be applied, without much strain, to France and Germany themselves. The pain is becoming so acute that even getting France and Germany to qualify on time might be political suicide for messrs Kohl and Chirac.

This may explain why Alain Delors, the author of the EMU project, withdrew from the French elections, and what the coming François Mitterrand had in mind when he spent his last political breath assisting the Chirac campaign. "This", as the late Nicholas Kaldor remarked after looking at British economic projects in 1974, "is an election we have

here to turn? America, says Herrick, looks south — the Mexican Gulf, perhaps the Falklands. But for Europe the defensible fallback is Russia, which may be unable to keep internal order. So Europe needs military clout; but Germany is unable, under its constitution to provide it. A European army would require political integration; the operation of EMU would lead there. A kind of Russian doll — a Trojan horse, money as a mask for politics as a mask for rearmament. Farcical, maybe, but the problem is real, so it is surely worth a thought.

My own more modest candidate: pensions. The European pensions crisis will need such unpopular answers, by way of higher taxes and lower benefits, that the continent needs a scapegoat. EMU qualifies.

But invent your own. These are deep waters, Watson.

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Who will speak for the Principality?

Ballykissangel, Father Ted, Cracker, Hamish Macbeth, McCallum ... surely something is missing? Every Celtic accent seems to go down a treat with the British viewing public except the lifting Welsh. Blame Neil Kinnock, blame Dylan Thomas, blame Lloyd George.

There is a firm belief in the Principality that there is a national prejudice against the Welsh accent. Television producers in particular feel that it is harder for Wales to get programmes on the national networks.

Bad enough when the enemy is over the borders, but worse if it is within. Which is the principal broadcaster for Wales? A battle for the honour is raging between BBC Wales and S4C, the Welsh counterpart of Channel 4, and BBC Wales is losing.

Proof of S4C's ascendancy under the aegis of its ambitious chairman, Prys Edwards, came with the appointment last month of the new BBC governor for Wales. For the first time, this worthy figure will not have a seat on the board of S4C as well. The new man to hold the slightly diminished but still desirable (at £16,330) part-time job is Roger Spencer Jones, the chairman of the Council of Welsh Training and Enterprise Councils. Not reappointed as governor was the controversial Tory Dr Gwyn Jones, whose term expired at the end of the year. Virginia Bottomley, the Heritage Secretary, apparently was willing to renew him, but the Welsh Office was not.

In November the Broadcasting Council for Wales, which oversees BBC Wales, pleaded with Mrs Bottomley to think again about the S4C link. The BBC Welsh governor has always sat on S4C's board because of BBC Wales's statutory obligation to make for S4C ten hours a week of programmes in the Welsh language. Last year this gift (paid for by your licence fee and mine) was worth £17.5 million.

She did not relent. On December 13, Sir Christopher Bland, the BBC's Chairman, wrote to her to voice his disappointment. Looking ahead to the future when BBC Wales and S4C might each operate separate digital commercial channels (the ostensible reason for the removal of the BBC's man from the S4C board), he said "it would be a grave mistake" if BBC Wales were to come to be regarded "as being somehow less Welsh" than S4C.

But Welsh costs money. BBC Wales is much the poorer of the two. Sianel Pedwar Cymru, to give it the name with which its operators answer the telephone, has £72 million a year to spend on one television channel aimed exclusively at Wales. In contrast, BBC Wales has £49.6 million a year to finance Radio Wales plus two television channels which it fondly hopes,

will sometimes be national in its reach. Declaring my interest once again, (Welsh husband, Welsh house), I very much hope that BBC Wales will get more on the national network this year than last year's meagre eight hours. One has to remember that not everything made by BBC Wales sounds Welsh, such as Jan Morris's recent travel documentaries. There's some good stuff on the way from Cardiff, including *Tiger Bay* and *Drovers Gold*. May one of them catch on.

Poor Carlton television. Just when it thought it was going to shed its reputation for vulgarity, it came up with *The Monarchy - A Nation Decides*. Watching this was like watching the social-climbing matron spoil her big night out by drinking from the finger-bowl. This rich, unloved ITV company will have to settle for the populist *medias* unless it enlists the services of a professional image-changer. But not Max Clifford.

The Prince of Wales has made a more original choice for his make-over wizard. He has snared for his new press secretary the young (well, 30) man who quickly turned the Press Complaints Commission around and let all the credit go to the commission chairman, Lord Wakeham (now reappointed until 1999).

The skilled and discreet Mark Bolland, director of the PCC from 1991 to mid-1996, managed to quieten cries for new legislation to curb the press and to make the PCC seem capable of being dealt with, while keeping the newspapers in line.

In moving to accentuate the positive side of the Prince, Bolland and crew are on the right track. They could make more of one of his greatest assets: to speak English beautifully. They might help further by reminding the heir to the throne of that wise tip from John Kennedy's book never put on a funny hat. When given one by whomsoever - cowboys, Boy Scouts, emirs or Maoris - the trick is to admire it, hold it up for the photographers, then hand it over to your press secretary.

As I sat in my Welsh fastness over the holidays, nothing on television entertained me more than BBC2's documentary on the peregrine falcon, which we can watch from start to finish, ears erect, nose up against the screen, head swivelling to follow the action. It was a kind of pornography for pets - naked chicks pecking their way out of shells, hawks tearing at raw pigeon meat. Our cat also rushes across the room to watch the Famous Grouse commercial. Are petfood manufacturers, I wonder, directing their advertising at the right target?



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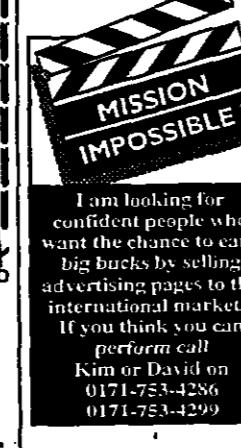
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مكتبة من الأصل

Hello! fights to stay top

Hello!'s most successful issue was Gazza's wedding. Carol Midgley says royals might be faded out to beat off growing competition

Last year was a peculiar one for Maggie Koumi, the much lampooned editor of *Hello!* magazine. In the space of six months she achieved record sales, managed to fall out with her international interview-geber, the Marquesa de Valera, and ended 1996 by spectacularly admitting to a roomful of rival editors that she personally would not have given coffee-table space to *Hello!*'s most successful issue ever — Paul Gascogne's wedding.

This year also promises to be a defining one for *Hello!* and for the rest of the celebrity magazine market. In 1996 three new titles — *Here!*, *Now* and *Enjoy* — emerged and *OK!* transformed from a monthly to a weekly, resulting in five magazines scrabbling for a bite of the pie. Latest circulation figures suggest that only *Hello!* and *OK!* have significantly put on sales, and 1997 seems set for a head-to-head between the two titles, both of which claim to be the best friend of the rich and famous.

Industry insiders are especially interested to see precisely how *Hello!* will fight off the new pretender to its throne. Last year Koumi made no secret of the fact that she thought the Gazza showcase was too downmarket for a *Hello!* front cover, even though it sold almost 650,000 copies — an all-time high. (Soon afterwards, the Marquesa, who set up the deal, announced she was leaving.)

It is particularly intriguing to see that last week's issue of *Hello!* features not a royal christening or an aristocrat's engagement party — the trademark of the *Hello!* we know and love — but the wedding of an actor from *Brookside*, the Channel 4 soap opera...

The *Brookside* cast celebrate the wedding of John 'Bing' Burgess, trumpets the front-page headline heralding eight pages of glossy photographs of the entire cast. John Burgess, 63, it tells us, plays *Brookside*'s 'well-intentioned busbody' David Crosbie.

But is it really the stuff we have come to expect from *Hello!*? *Brookside* is a very good, hard-hitting soap about the lives of several families in Liverpool," said one insider. "It is watched by about six million people a week but I would guess that very few of them are traditional readers of *Hello!*"

It could also be that Koumi has started to listen to the critics. Last year the paparazzi



Hello! is still the cream of the crop, but is it going downmarket in order to fight off competition from the five other celebrity magazines?

z's favourite Ulrika Jonsson popped up to tell *The Guardian* she was bored with the aristocratic profile of *Hello!* and preferred *OK!* "OK! has more accessible people and a more down-to-earth style than *Hello!*," she said.

Sharon Ring, editor of *OK!*, not surprisingly agrees with her — so much so that she turned her words into a full-page advert for the magazine.

"*Hello!* broke the mould. It

was the first celebrity magazine with great colour photos

but we feel it has lost the edge," said Ring. "Our strength is that we concentrate on the famous people that the public really cares about and not necessarily Prince Joachim of Denmark."

Ring, who took over as editor last autumn, added: "Look at our most successful edition ever. The cover featured pictures of Michelle Collins (Cindy Beale from *EastEnders*) with her new baby, and they were great pictures which our readers loved because she was someone they could identify with.

We also had a call from Diana, Princess of Wales. asking us to do a story on one

of her favourite charities, the Lighthouse Trust, and we were allowed access to the Princess. She is very aware that we are a highly popular magazine whereas a while ago she only had *Hello!*

"We believe we have made our mark. In a recent episode of *Absolutely Fabulous* Joanna Lumley talked about *Hello!* and *OK!* fighting it out for pictures of Saffron's wedding. People now put us in the same bracket as *Hello!* The only thing I envy them is their circulation figures. I know that there is division within the magazine at the moment and a lot of staff are unhappy. To be honest I was amazed when Maggie Koumi said that she had not bought the Paul Gascogne edition. I have never before heard an editor saying she wouldn't buy her own magazine."

Koumi, while apparently taking little pleasure in the Gascogne scoop, recognised its commercial value and made the decision to run it after the Marquesa clinched the deal through the couple's hairdresser.

Hello! is still very much the cream of the crop with regard to circulation. Its average weekly sales are just below

half a million and it has eight more pages than *OK!* But it has been accused of scraping the barrel for interviews (Barbi Benton, Sarah Biasini, Joaquin Cortes and Henrietta Spinck have been cited as examples) and *OK!* is regarded by many critics as looking fresher and more modern than the *Hello!* format.

OK! sells fewer than 200,000 copies a week but latest figures show it has increased by 9.10 per cent.

Ring said that the fact that it had increased circulation when so many new titles had come on the market was crucial. "If now, *Here!* and *Enjoy!* hadn't existed I think we might have overtaken *Hello!* by now," she said.

David Durman, editor of *Now*, which is owned by IPC and calls itself "the smarter woman's weekly", said: "*Hello!* is changing in the sense that all magazines need to change over time. Just like there are probably only ten jokes in the world there are only about ten real cover stars and you cannot keep featuring them. You have to go for something new."

The Gazza cover was a real sign of the times. It was a great sale for them and whether

Maggie Koumi didn't personally like it or not is not important. It is the fact she had the good sense to put it on the front."

Jane Ennis, editor of *Here!*, launched last June by Gruner and Jahr, said the *Brookside* cover was uncharacteristic for *Hello!* "It is an odd one for them and it must have taken a lot of persuasion to get the Spanish owner (Eduardo Sánchez) to run with someone he probably had never heard of.

"It is difficult to come up with a good cover every week and there are only so many pictures and celebrities to go round so you have to allow them a little deviance. To be honest we see ourselves in a very different market. *OK!* is trying to take sales from *Hello!* but we take a much more newsy approach."

Both Durman and Ennis believe the market is big enough to sustain all the titles and are confident their products have a healthy future. But others are convinced that the fight for readers will bring about big changes at *Hello!*, which could mean saying "goodbye" to the Euro royals.

Unchecked — the rise of the ranting columnists

Keth Waterhouse is calling for a cult of columnists. He believes there are far too many of the breed writing in today's national newspapers. It should, he says, start at the younger end, "particularly with those twitting young women with very little to say who are now given so much space by editors".

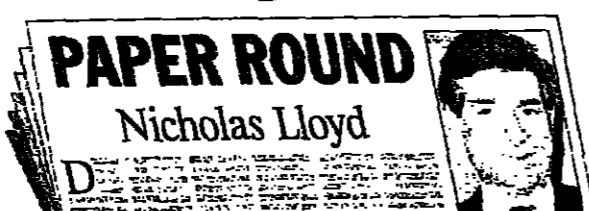
Waterhouse's tongue-in-check demand follows the sacking of Sir Peregrine Worsthorne last week from *The Sunday Telegraph* after 36 years.

As newspapers have grown fatter and fatter, there has certainly been a proliferation of columnists. Editors are constantly seeking the new, brilliant, stylish writer who may add sales to their newspaper — and they are willing to pay a great deal of money for the right person.

Richard Littlejohn, who conducts journalistic muggings for the *Daily Mail*, is reputed to earn £100,000 a year, and Tony Parsons in *The Mirror* an estimated £150,000.

Competition pushes columnists to become ever more opinionated, less willing to examine an argument coolly and intelligently. Public figures are either heroes or villains. Too often, uninformative ranting has become the order of the day, particularly in the pop tabloids.

Dominic Lawson, Editor of *The Sunday Telegraph* and sacker of Perry



Worsthorne, says he did not fire his best-known columnist because of a personal feud that has gone on for some years between the two.

"Every column has a natural lifespan and Perry's had run its course," he told me.

Lawson doubts that columnists actually sell extra copies of a newspaper. "Mary Kenny was a very popular writer on *The Sunday Telegraph* and some readers have written to ask us to get Mary back. But I doubt that they are reading her in *The Express*.

"To grow the readership, you need differing voices who are not just chips off the old block, reinforcing the newspaper's own views. You don't want a ghetto of opinion."

Waterhouse believes that standards are plummeting. To be a columnist of quality, a writer must be a practised journalist, he says.

"He should have been a reporter, an accurate collector of facts. There are too many who don't know anything or anyone. They take a cutting out of a newspaper, they don't check facts, and they just comment. There's a

says: "I am often up till four in the morning, pacing around, agonising over what to write. My fear is almost like a Freudian dream. I have this notion of being naked in Oxford Street, I suppose in my column I am exposing myself to the readers. I sometimes write a sentence seven or eight times to make it easy to read."

Alan Coren of *The Times* has some sympathy for Terry. "The problem with humorous writing is that you never know if anyone is laughing. You must assess your audience accurately more than any other columnist. I try to think of *The Times*'s readers as my peers, chaps like Waterhouse."

"I am the kind of Terry Waite or John McCarthy of popular journalism. I bang away on the radiator not knowing whether anyone out there is picking it up."

Worsthorne agrees that the spread of columnists may be out of control. "When I started in newspapers ... opinion was expressed in leaders and editorials, anonymously."

For all the current provocation, however, few readers' letters are published disagreeing with columnists. Could it be that the modern reader has worked out that many of the over-the-top statements are not to be taken too seriously? They are simply part of the growth of the info-tainment sector of the newspaper industry.

As part of our New Year New Career series *The Times*, in association with Saville & Holdsworth, international leaders in assessing individuals and jobs, gives you a unique opportunity to receive your personal profile absolutely free. The three-page questionnaire was inserted in Monday's newspaper.

An interview used alone compares poorly with a selection process that uses more than one assessment method. This is why questionnaires, such as *The Times* personal profile, ability tests and management exercises, are used by more and more organisations, together with the interview in a "multi method" approach, often known as an assessment centre.

This provides a wealth of information about a range of skills such as numeric and verbal reasoning, oral communication, approach to teamwork and leadership potential, specific to the role, information crucial to help the employer make the best possible match between candidates and the demands of the job.

The interview, however, is valuable when conducted effectively, providing an opportunity for candidate and employer to discuss how information from different sources fits together.

How to get your FREE Personal Profile
Collect four differently numbered tokens from *The Times* and send them with the application form (another will be published on Saturday) and the completed questionnaire which was inserted in Monday's newspaper.

Thousands die, but is Diana flying out?

Our press is too insular and world news uneven, says Bridget Harrison

"HUNDREDS of immigrants disappear in the Mediterranean. Was it murder? Who even cares?" *The Observer*'s headline last Sunday.

The paper claims to have unearthed a tragedy bordering on biblical proportions in which 280 illegal immigrants — from Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka — were drowned at gunpoint of their ship. Simultaneously *The Observer* suggests that readers and other newspapers will not give a damn, simply because the victims were the wrong kind of dead — they were "acting illegally, and they were black".

The remarkable silence maintained by all of Monday's papers suggests that *The Observer* was right. News reporters outside *The Observer* justify the silence by waiting for further evidence that the story is founded on fact.

The validity of the story aside, *The Observer* raises a pertinent issue: that the insularity of the British press means that coverage of world news is highly uneven. Furthermore, if Third World people are to make the news, their stories must be several times more horrific than those of their Western counterparts.

News must be sexy. From the page it must grab the reader with a headline and interest him or her beyond the opening paragraph. Newsmakers argue that the further from the reader's mind a country is in miles or perception, the harder it becomes to engage their interest because the news topic is too far removed from his or her reality.

Foreign correspondents battling to place stories from abroad must find a relevant spin to make the

news. For example, the experiences of a British aid worker abroad, or visits and campaigns by British celebrities. What relevance do the thousands crippled by antipersonnel mines in Angola have for us? Little Diana, Princess of Wales, visits them.

In crisis situations the British element to a story is further perpetuated by aid agencies and charities who work in the Third World. Relief agencies actively court the Western media to publicise their activities and generate donations from the public. As a result, not only do we equate the Third World with disasters, but imagine that these are rarely resolved without our help. We are uninterested by the death of ten Indians because we have heard the story before. We are surprised by disastrous events in countries that seem frequently incompetent without Western aid.

Perhaps this situation would be remedied if newsmakers equated sexiness not solely with relevance, but with the ability to capture the imagination of the reader, no matter what the subject matter.

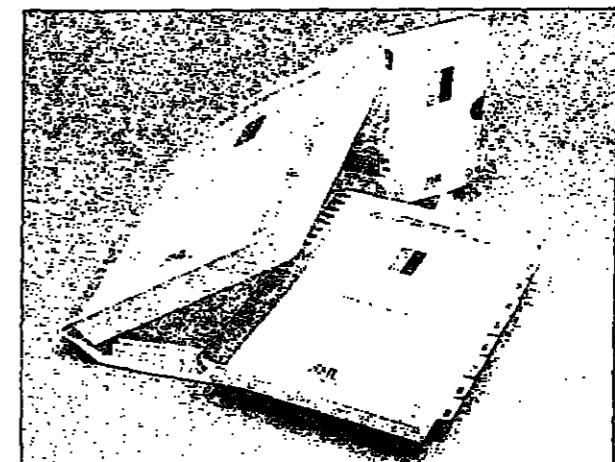
THIS is a quality lacking in *The Observer*'s immigrant story. Skating over sketchy facts with sensationalism, the story loses much of its grit. A more sober approach, with the story run as a page lead inside might have had more serious impact than the paper's shock-horror page one treatment.

• The author has written a postgraduate thesis on the role of newsmakers in the creation of Africa's media image, at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

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If you would like a questionnaire and missed Monday's paper please call 0171 481 337. Lines are open 9.30am to 3pm.

CHANGING TIMES



THEATRE 1

Wave goodbye to \$10 million: a new book chronicles the perils of mounting a big musical



THEATRE 2

A Hong Kong boy's trials in an English public school receive mythic treatment in *New Territories*



OFFER

Fascinating *Aida*, and scintillating prices: see the Theatre Club panel (below) for details



TOMORROW

How does Whitney Houston rate in *The Preacher's Wife*? Read Geoff Brown's review of the new movies

JOHN MARCUS/CAROLINE ROSE

How to go for a song and lose a fortune

Benedict Nightingale on the hard work that goes into a flop musical

According to the director Mike Ockrent, it is like swimming through shark-infested waters with a bleeding toe. For the designer Robin Wagner, it means fitting together a thousand moving parts, any one of which may fail and force you to start again, an enterprise he compares to dancing on a bowl of bubbling soup which boils over when you least expect it. For the librettist Larry Gelbart, it is like house-training a dinosaur. Surely there is no genre more likely to drive people to frenzy, despair or outre' similes than the large-scale musical.

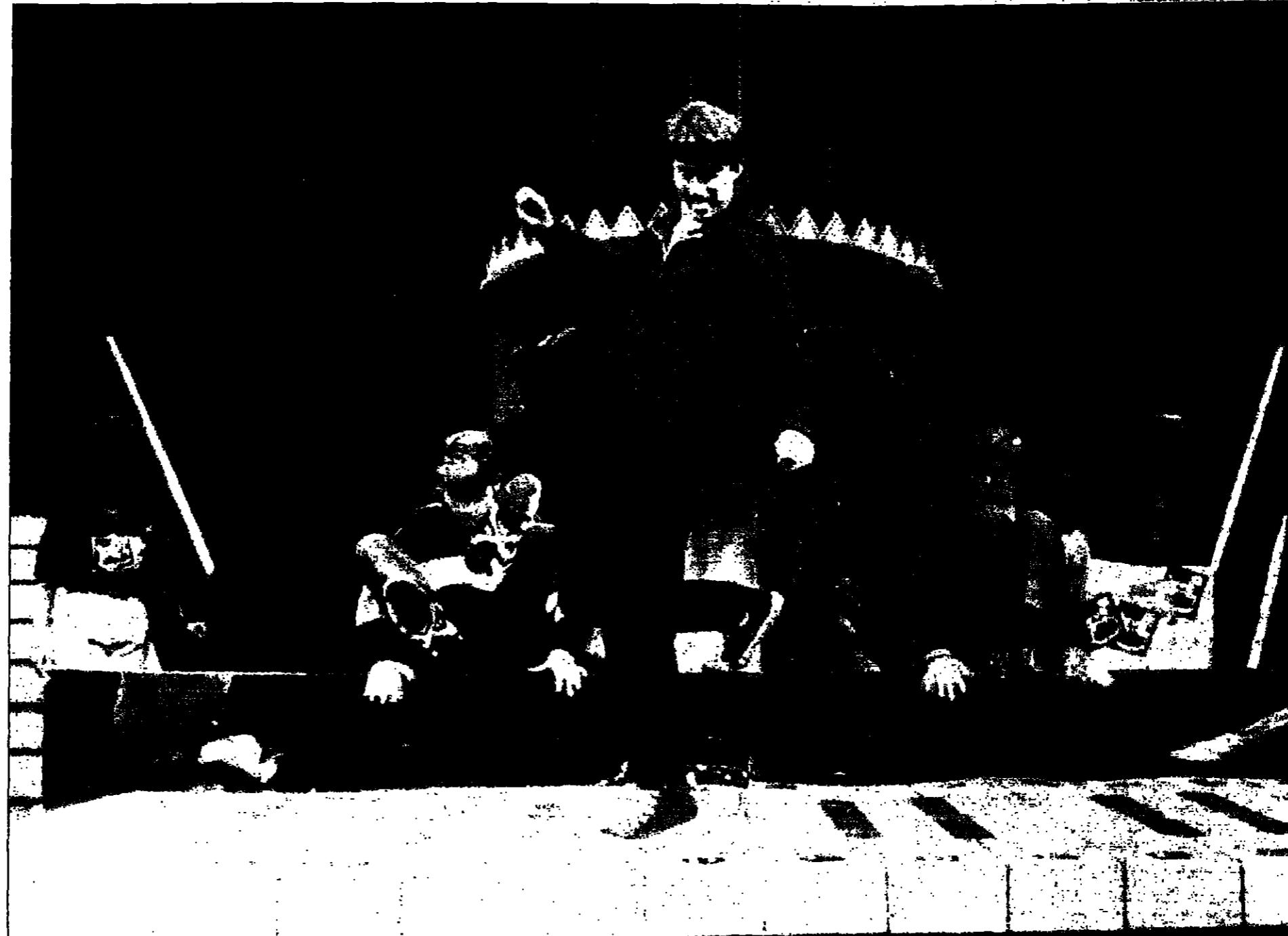
All these quotes come from Barbara Isenberg's fascinating log of the creation of *Big*, a musical that played for a few months on Broadway last year, costing and losing its backers more than \$10 million. Although published in America, *Making it Big* (Limelight, £25) tells a tale that crosses national boundaries. It would certainly provoke wry smiles from Cameron Mackintosh, who recently reworked and relaunched *Martin Guerre*, or Andrew Lloyd Webber, who has just postponed the Broadway opening of his *Whistle Down the Wind* in order to re-jig it, or Garth Drabinsky, who introduced new methods into the making of *Ragtime*, the \$10 million musical that opened last month in his native Toronto.

What Drabinsky did was organise "focus groups", in which members of the public joined people from the industry, watched workshop perfor-

mances of *Ragtime* and gave their reactions. This is a technique borrowed from Hollywood, where movies often change as a result of previews, and it had its creative effects in Toronto. For instance, more was made of Houdini and Evelyn Nesbit, two of the real-life characters in E.L. Doctorow's original novel, and more ragtime music was introduced.

But was there a danger of transferring creative control from Terrence McNally, Stephen Flaherty and their colleagues to some lowest common denominator of public taste? "No," Drabinsky says. "Generally what it did was confirm our own suspicions about what needed fine-tuning. But you can get so close to a show you lose perspective. And when 50 people tell you the same thing you have to say, wait a minute, maybe there's something to do. It's a lot cheaper than rushing around making changes when you're blasted by the critics."

Even so, some American critics felt that Doctorow needed further doctoring before the musical makes what my own eyes and ears tell me will be a successful transfer to Broadway later this year. As Mackintosh emphasises, and the makers of *Big* discovered the hard way, there is a vast gap between a nice performance in a rehearsal room and a show complete with sets, costumes and full orchestra. "There is no magic formula," Mackintosh says. "Hit musicals come from a myriad of start-ups and often from leftfield."



A \$100,000 piano with multicoloured flashing lights, 431 sound, lighting and design cues, 220 costumes: no wonder the musical *Big* lost its Broadway backers \$10 million

Who would have thought something as casually conceived as *Five Guys Named Moe* would do so well, he asks? Who would have predicted mega-success for his own *Cats* or *Les Misérables*? Conversely, *Foxy and Bess* was an initial failure and *No, No, Nanette*, the biggest hit of the 1930s, so worried its American impresarios that they opened it in London before New York. *Oklahoma!* was frantically reworked at the last moment and, only days before its West End triumph, *Oliver!* was widely tipped as a disaster.

Mackintosh does think it is a pity, at least in England, pre-London runs for big musicals are becoming a thing of the past. Had he opened *Martin Guerre* in Manchester, as he had

planned, he would doubtless have seen that the plot was less coherent and well-motivated than it needed to be. As it was, the radical improvements he made cost £1 million and made Horner's demands on the cast, who rehearsed one *Martin Guerre* while playing another.

The evidence of *Big* is that workshops can jolt even the professionals into a false sense of security and that regional try-outs can mend but, finally, not make. Maybe there was something flawed in the very notion of giving the Broadway treatment to the Tom Hanks movie about the 12-year-old who finds himself in a grown-up body, job and relationship, maybe not. But the producer who warned that *Big* was too big for the theatre was right. The one who said he had never

found capital easier to raise, and persistently radiated optimism, was sadly wrong.

Without its month in Detroit *Big* would have been a famous fiasco, instead of

what I found it, a diverting show in sometimes dubious taste. There were vast, complex sets, 431 different sound, lighting and design cues, and 220 costumes for a cast of 31. There were elaborate props, most ominously a \$100,000 piano with multicoloured

lights

meant to flash in sync with

performers dancing on its

keys. That often went wrong in Detroit, but then so did almost everything else.

Was it a coincidence that a

convention of witches was being held in the hotel where the company stayed? Probably. But previews were cancelled. Sets failed to move, slid

"as if through Jello", or collided.

The men's loo in a bus station scene went crashing into a toyshop. An accident on a roller-coaster put an actress in hospital. The leading man, Daniel Jenkins, had to have a knee operation. "Think Vietnam," said an actor with four fast costume changes to make.

The show's beginning and the end of each act were endlessly changed. People were told not to learn replacement songs they had just been

given because they were already being rewritten. No fewer than 41 numbers were ditched. David Shire, the lyricist, talked of "a heart being plant with the patient awake". Richard Maltby, the composer, felt like a boat being bombed. Of the vital opening song Shire said: "Put Richard and me in a room with a piano and three monkeys with a typewriter for the age of the universe, and it's just possible we might get it right before the monkeys type *Hamlet*."

Yet there was optimism, and a \$1.3 million marketing budget, when a radically revised *Big* made a delayed Broadway opening on April 28, just before the qualification date for the 1996 Tony awards. The show got a rave review from the all-important *New York Times*, but its troubles were

not over. After reading Isenberg's book you thank God the Olivier Awards do not obsess the British in the mad, dazzling way the Tonies do. *Big* was not nominated for best musical, and, although it ran 200 performances, never recovered from the snags.

Play director Ockrent, who felt like a hunch with his hands tied behind his back, not knowing when the next guy would whack him. Play his team, who gave months of toil to a project in which they genuinely believed. But the choreographer, Susan Stroman, drew the right conclusion when she said: "Until you have it onstage you just don't know." She might have been forgiven if she had gone further: "Try something easier, like rebuilding Russia."

THEATRE: Opening show of the London International Mime Festival

Portraiture with a cleft palette

The Belgian company Mossoux Boné (at the Purcell Room) opens the London International Mime Festival like the flap of a letterbox. Through it we see a beautiful woman, sliced off at the waist, her face in profile, one hand pointing skyward, the other playing sensually with her neck, posing as if for a portrait. The rest of the stage is smothered in black. An electronic soundtrack rumbles with industrial menace. The woman begins to twitch like a puppet on a string.

Suddenly, in a small square eight feet above her, appears the head of a medieval cleric, staring straight into the mouth of a large halibut. A clue perhaps to what is unfolding? Or merely the fact that no self-respecting mime festival can possibly be without its stuffed fish and inscrutable programme notes.

The scholarship boy about to return to England after his Hong Kong holiday takes a last look at his birthplace; views are projected onto the giant white T-shirt that serves as a screen, black and white views like all the others we have seen there, but last of all comes the Union Jack in full colour. The boy stares ahead, says nothing, the lights go out.

An image of his uncertain future here in the land of the bleed, blight and screw? Perhaps, but doubts as to Hong Kong's future when Peking takes possession is wrapped up in the image as well. 1997, the next production by Yellow Earth Theatre, will explore the effect of the handover on this country's Chinese community, but the exploration will need to reach greater depth than this play achieves.

David K.S. Tse created an excellent children's play, *The Magic Paintbrush* (worth looking out for on its next tour), and made a fine job at Leicester Studio recently of David Henry Hwang's strange, elegant and tough *House of the Sleeping Beauties*. But his story of a

blacked-out stage continues to light up like an advent calendar, revealing luminous heads and truncated bodies visible through different-sized picture frames.

The inspiration for *The Last Hallucinations of Lucas Cranach, the Elder* is the 16th-century German artist who famously painted Martin Luther and some exceptionally fine nudes. It is a selection of his portraits which Mossoux Boné dismembers and brings to life, exploring the tensions between the subject and composition, light and dark.

The genteel sitters, dressed (and sometimes undressed) in period costume, strike odd iconic poses. A heroine, Joan

of Arc perhaps, flirts dangerously with a sword, one breast exposed. A woman, in an early version of a chef's hat, reclines like Manet's naked Olympia in a low, rectangular frame.

And a naked male torso, lit like marble, is caressed by two women to the sound of an amplified kazoo. Their trapped bodies and repressed desires make them sway and touch each other with fluttering fingers.

For brief moments this animation can look beautiful, even at times startling. But Mossoux Boné's efforts to use the medium of theatre to expose the limitations of painting is better as a concept than as drama. The way the pictures are

framed, and how the subjects relate, is bereft of useful meaning. Their silky semaphores — cramped arm movements and clawed hands — is tedious rather than mysterious.

Only in the rare instances when two performers combine for a double portrait, such as the dancing nude torso of Adam and Eve, does a stray ray of wit pierce the rarefied gloom.

And only at the end, when the five performers break out of their paintings, slowly traverse the stage, and threaten to invade our space, does Mossoux Boné generate a genuine frisson of confrontation. It is too little, too late. I did not see any art historians jumping out of their seats shouting Eureka!

JAMES CHRISTOPHER

Puzzling Chinese lesson

New Territories
Oval House

bright boy sent from a farm in the New Territories to an English public school follows too thinly-sketched a path. Tse adds mythic weight by introducing scenes from another journey westward, that of the Monkey King and his adventures with Piggy, the Priest and one other. These are played with grace and agility, but the resemblance is little more than geographical.

The school bully (Paul Courtenay Hyu)

AFTER THE HOLIDAYS, PLAN YOUR DEPARTURE.

See the 26-page *Appointments* section this Thursday in *The Times*.

http://www.thetimes.co.uk CHANGING TIMES

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JEREMY KINGSTON



■ HERITAGE

The Public Record Office that made Victorian pile in Chancery Lane should be saved for the nation



■ JAZZ 1

From the virtuoso saxophonist Julian Argüelles, confirming his reputation as a top improviser



■ JAZZ 2

... to the silken-voiced Christine Tobin: the Babel Festival offered a tour of the current scene



■ RISING STAR

His first film is released this year, he is directing for the BBC — and Shane Meadows is still only 23

Who should win this Victorian beauty?

■ HERITAGE

The V&A is the perfect suitor for the Public Record Office, says

Marcus Barnet

Hirst Greenway, then Admiralty, now and now the Public Record Office. The future of this mighty Victorian pile in London's Chancery Lane is a key test of the Government's commitment to its own guidelines on the disposal of surplus historic buildings.

The PRO was built by the Victorians to house something even more important than the Stone of Scone or even the Crown Jewels. It was to be the storehouse of the very stuff of the nation's history, beginning with the Domesday Book and *Magna Carta*. The question now is: should the PRO be sold off to the most profitable use — as barristers' chambers, perhaps, or a Knightsbridge-style "spare-hole" — or can it once again become a great library and archive, which would put its thousands of miles of sturdy slate shelving straight back into the use for which they were intended?

The impetus for building the PRO came from the savage fire which destroyed the old Houses of Parliament in 1834. None of the older buildings in which the records were stored was fireproof. The site chosen was on the Rolls Estate just north of Fleet Street, but construction was repeatedly postponed as the cost of building Parliament spiralled.

Finished in 1851, the PRO is

one of those buildings where a second architect has大大ly embellished what began as an austere building.

Sir James Pennethorne was constrained to design a utilitarian building — "Gothic of a kind true enough, yet functional enough to have pleased

Pugin if he had seen it," wrote Sir Nikolaus Pevsner. It is to his successor Sir John Taylor we owe the magnificent Chancery Lane front, with its festive octagonal turrets inspired by Henry VII's Chapel at Westminster Abbey.

The PRO consists of 240

strongrooms on four floors, each with an iron door. The typical layout is a chamber 25 feet high with a spiral staircase leading to an upper level, with a grating door.

Pennethorne's biographer, Geoffrey Tyack, says that the dimensions were determined at the insistence of the London Fire Brigade. The weight of documents made it essential to use iron in the structure. But in a raging fire iron would

burn, so it was clad in brick. Even the shelves are of slate rather than wood.

The original idea had been to extend the present L-shaped building to form a quadrangle. But in the 1960s a huge increase in the number of documents led to the construction of a new PRO at Kew, though the reading room at Chancery Lane remained in use until the final papers were moved months ago.

For once, the perfect solution exists. The Victoria and Albert Museum desperately needs more space for its magnificent one-million-volume art library, not only for an extra 15,000 volumes a year, but to provide more space for readers. "We have had to become much more restrictive about issuing readers' tickets," says the librarian, Jan van der Wateren.

The present options are expensive and short-term. They include filling in V&A light wells, excavating beneath the Prelli garden and knocking about the Henry Cole wing. By moving the library to a new site, the V&A would achieve free circulation around the main courtyard at first-floor level, and could open up the present low medieval treasury to reveal its original soaring height.

The main objection to the

move comes from the museum's own curators, 90 per cent of whom recently told the director that they want the library to stay. For them it is a fantastically convenient tool. They can browse in the stacks and take books to their offices when writing catalogues. In compensation, Wateren proposes a daily book delivery from the PRO.

Mary Jane Long, the specialist library architect retained by the V&A, says: "The PRO strongrooms provide security of valuable books without resorting to locked cases where mould can develop. The PRO's slate shelves come in every size, deep enough for the largest art books." She believes that the awkwardness of the strongroom mezzanines can be overcome. "Electric trolleys with a scissors lift could rise up to the upper level at the press of a button."

The one facility the PRO building lacks is a large 200-seat reading room, but English Heritage has agreed that this can be discreetly constructed in a sunken area to the north, now filled with huts.

The PRO's splendid octagonal reading room, which houses 30 or 40 readers, would become a library for the museum's rare books. The former Rolls Chapel, with wonderful stained glass, would make an excellent exhibition gallery devoted to the craft of the book.

The problem is that the V&A is a penniless institution de-

pendent on lottery funding, while the PRO stands on what some see as a valuable piece of real estate. PACE, the property advisers to the Civil Estates, have already nearly transformed one of the strongrooms into a prototype barristers' set, with an upper gallery for pupils. Fears of a commercial sale have been increased by the fact that under the 1857

Rolls Act the Crown Commissioners, never slow in making a bob or two, may have a stake in the property and could end up taking the lead in disposal. But the latest government guidelines (1995) state clearly that "maximisation of receipts should not be the overriding aim" with historic buildings. At the PRO a value also needs to be set on a scheme which

preserves the interior complete with its remarkable fittings, and equally on the "eco-waste" of destroying immensely durable shelving for a million or more books and no doubt paying for it all anew when the V&A eventually has to move. Even with buildings and their users, there is such a thing as a marriage made in heaven.

JAZZ: Chris Parker on the Babel Festival at Blackheath Concert Halls

Instrumental polyglots

— ensured that the pill was not oversugared.

Bronley's favourite son, Billy Jenkins, characteristically took this process to extremes with his set, featuring his Voice of God Collective supplemented by the Fun Horns of Berlin. His fractured irreverence and determined non-conformism tend to obscure his considerable musical gifts, but the time for his inimitable brand of knockabout irony might be dawning.

The Fun Horns themselves — saxophonist Thomas Klemm and Volker Schlotz, trombonist Jorg Huke and trumpeter Rainer Bremcke — range freely between Latin minimalism, free jazz and funk, and they opened the second day with a virtuosic but informal display.

Such untroubled eclecti-

cism is Babel's hallmark, so the label provides a natural home for Orquesta Mahatma, a trio comprising Stuart Hall on various guitars and violin, bassist Thad Kelly and percussionist Paul Clavris. In an hour of homespun but surprisingly controlled music, they visited Brazil, Cuba and various points east, incorporating everything from gypsy music to the traditional *Goldene Slumbers*.

The remainder of the festival relied heavily on the multifarious talents of the brothers Julian and Steve Argüelles, saxophonist and drummer respectively. In both a powerful quartet session featuring guitarist Mike Walker and in a duo with Steve, Julian Argüelles confirmed his reputation as one of Britain's most skilful players.

Brother Steve was featured in two widely differing contexts: the quartet Blue Moon in a Function Room, appropriately introduced as a "Home Counties wedding orchestra", and his Paris-based trio, the Recyclers. The former band features a twin-guitar front line of Billy Jenkins and Stuart Hall, along with bassist

Steve Watts, and plays anything that might be considered suitable for the functions referred to in its title. On this occasion they applied their light, wryly ironic touch to material ranging from *Tiger Rag* through a foxtrot (*Puttin' on the Ritz*) to a quickstep medley of *Lady Be Good* and *Johnny B. Goode*.

Like this quartet, the Recyclers — pianist Benoit Delbecq and guitarist Noel Akchoté — depend heavily on Argüelles's deft but pounding drumming style to centre them while they explore terrain including free improvisation, semi-abstract sound sculpture and tightly organised, occasionally almost lyrically impressionistic original compositions. They employ a variety of techniques, from prepared piano to industrial noise, to achieve their extraordinary textural and rhythmic heterogeneity.

After wild adventure, singer Christine Tobin's festival-closing set, despite embracing everything from Joni Mitchell and Nina Simone songs through a deliciously smooth *Embraceable You* to her own highly innovative compositions, seemed almost conventional. In all these modes, though, she employed the silken, intimate strength of her voice to great effect, turning in a performance in which emotional depth and sophistication were unfussy conveyed by her characteristic technical prowess.

GREAT BRITISH HOPES

Rising stars in the arts firmament

SHANE MEADOWS

Age: 23.

Profession: Film director.

The story so far: *Small Time*, the 60-minute tale of crooks, lies and car boot sales which Meadows made in a week for just £5,000 (and acted in — he is pictured here as Jumbo, one of the leads), has been picked up by Electric Pictures for cinema release this year. The BBC has signed him to direct another of his scripts, *24/7 — The Church of Alan Darc*, with "a really big name" lined up to play the title character, who stars a boxing club for underprivileged kids on a Midlands council estate.

A typical film-school graduate? Hardly. From the age of ten, he learnt about film by renting ten movies a week from a market trader. "The more serious side of things came when I started watching *Film on Four*. I've never had any formal training."

Directorial debut: "I made a spoof commercial at school with me as a car salesman who tries to convince a bloke to trade in his BMW for a Morris Minor. I was hailed as a star by the pupils and a nutter by the teachers."

Chequered past: "I was a bit of a naughty lad on my photography course. They threw me off at the end of the first year." On the dole, he worked for nothing for a film training company, in return for the loan of video equipment on which he made 25 shorts in two years.

Professional philosophy: "I'm out to make films, not money." What if someone offered him the chance to direct a \$30 million epic? "I'd rather make 50 films for a million each in lots of different genres."



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CHOICE 1

Caroline Blakiston relives her experience playing Chekhov in Russia

VENUE: Tonight at the Jermyn Street Theatre



CHOICE 2

Scottish Opera stages Puccini's tragic romance, *La Bohème*

VENUE: Tonight at the Theatre Royal, Glasgow



CHOICE 3

The fourth annual *Celtic Connections* opens in Glasgow

VENUE: From today at various venues



DANCE

English National Ballet bids farewell to the Festival Hall with a lacklustre account of *Coppélia*

BILL COOPER

Depths of winter

IF SCHUBERT'S *Winterreise* is one of the sternest yardsticks against which a Lieder singer can measure himself, then Matthias Görlin, with his awe-inspiring rendering, heard at the Wigmore Hall on Monday night, is making the strongest possible claim to the mantle of his teacher, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau.

What makes Görlin's so

Matthias Görlin
Wigmore Hall

count of Schubert's harrowing late cycle stand head and shoulders above any other I have heard for some time is the subtlety with which he dramatises it. With Irvin Gage a wonderfully showy accompanist, Görlin got the winter journey off to a bracing start in a fast marching tempo. But over those chords, Görlin sketched a vivid narrative of the loveless wanderer, sculpting phrases to give the illusion of forward momentum.

Thus indeed, was the key to his compelling delivery. Subsidary notes were thrown away in order to give shape to each unfolding line. *Auf dem Flusse* exemplified the process to perfection, the last stanza moving from interrogation of the heart to rousing acknowledgement of its raging torment.

Not only is Görlin's richly burnished tone a joy to experience in its own right, but he can put it to any use he wishes. Much more interesting than belting out the climactic note of the second stanza of *Die Post* is Görlin's diminuendo — consistent with the piano part and with the poised doubt of the singer.

A Winterreise to remember.

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PA to Marketing Director

The Marketing Services Group at Prodive consists of 20 staff who hold responsibility for sponsor liaison as well as corporate marketing. The Group is headed by the Marketing Director who is seeking a new PA.

The position holds great responsibility and requires the highest standard of professionalism and dedication. The environment is highly pressured and requires the ability to control multiple projects with autonomy and diplomacy.

Prodive works with major global blue-chip companies and the Marketing Director requires support from an individual with experience of conducting business at this level. The successful candidate will have some eight years experience with a strong track record as a PA at Director level. Outstanding computer and shorthand skills are essential.

Prodive's Banbury headquarters are located at junction 11 of the M40, twenty minutes from Oxford.

Apply by sending your cv including current salary details to:

Sue Brown, Human Resources Manager, Prodive Limited, Banbury, Oxfordshire OX16 7JS. Telephone 01295 273355

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Based London - c£24,000

An exciting opportunity exists to join a leading multinational organisation as PA to the Director of Global Accounts who is responsible for major business development. You will have excellent customer service skills and be able to work on your own initiative. In addition you will have the aptitude to communicate and integrate closely with all functional areas.

Please apply in writing with full CV, quoting Ref: EP105 to:

Kim Summers-Johnson, Triangle Management Services Ltd, 10 Penn Road, Bensfield, Bucks HP9 2LH



Small investment Company, specializing in Mortgages. (FSA Registered) Based in the West End, seeking bright, ambitious, self-starters. PA/Secretary. Varied and interesting work for someone with business acumen. Attractive compensation package with bonus. Please fax details to 0171 494 1374

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PA/SECRETARY to Managing Director. £22K/£25K, based. Small Start up Financial C/I. You must have had min 3 yrs sec exp. Fast copy. Basic Excel. Word 4 Windows. C.V. to fax No. 0171 929 2616.

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for this growing firm of head hunters with a large international client base, someone to join our successful support team, working in an atmosphere that is informal, friendly and often hectic.

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For more information please call Julie McCarthy on 0171 404 4039. Diamond House, 37-38 Hatton Garden, London EC1N 8FW.

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Small friendly insurance firm requires secretary for Managing Director. Good all rounder providing administrative skills with smart presentation, good telephone manner and skilled in W4W. 6.00 with 65 w.p.m.

Salary £15,000 per annum. Please fax C.V. to Lorna Chetwynd at Devon Graveline Group, 6979 Mark Lane, Finsbury EC1R 7BS. Finsbury No. 0171 455 2727. (No Agencies).

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Fluency in at least two additional European languages

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PA to Managing Director/ Office Manager

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Europe's largest broadcast consultancy requires an experienced PA to the MD of this fast growing international organisation. You will be a highly organised, articulate individual able to provide a first rate secretarial service. You will also be responsible for ensuring the smooth running of a multi-faceted and often hectic office. Experience as a Director level is a must as are good skills including full conversance with Microsoft Office and Powerpoint.

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Age 30-35
The office is high-powered, small (6 executives), located in Victoria, and primarily developing major projects, particularly in Asia.

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Candidates must have first class W4W6 and shorthand skills (60/100), A levels, be highly computer literate with Powerpoint experience, have relevant large and small company experience, and be a team player with energy, commitment and flexibility.

Please fax letter, demonstrating how these requirements are met, and full CV including present salary to Mr R Mathrani, Vanguard Capital on 0171 584 8595.

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BI-LINGUAL PERSONAL ASSISTANT

Reporting to the Managing Director of Mercedes-Benz Finance, you will be engaged in a range of administrative duties including organising travel, managing post and correspondence, preparing Board Papers, international liaison and providing support to the Regional Office team.

Applicants should be fluent in English and German as well as having a good command of another main European language. Candidates should also be computer literate, with 45 wpm typing and knowledge of Word, Power point and Excel. Previous experience in a Financial Services Company would be advantageous but is not essential.

If you are interested in applying, please send a comprehensive CV together with an indication of current salary, to: Janina Pownall, Mercedes-Benz Finance Ltd, Marlborough Court, Sunrise Parkway, Linford Wood, Milton Keynes MK14 6YR. Please quote Ref: PA102.

Secretary/PA to the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor (Sir Brian Follett) is the senior academic and administrative officer in the University. His present secretary is retiring on 30 April 1997, and the University is seeking to replace her from around the same date. Applicants should be able to demonstrate first class secretarial skills, with the ability to work on their own initiative and with minimal supervision. A degree and/or previous experience in a relevant University post would be an advantage.

Salary will be at an appropriate point on the Grade 6 scale:

£16,410 - £19,028 pa (under review).

Applications and further particulars from the Personnel Office, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL (tel: 01203 523683). Please quote reference 2510C9.

Closing date for applications 30 January 1997.

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Education Unit - Administrator

£12,500 - £13,000 per annum

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This is a central role in the Education Unit providing full administrative support to the Education Team. Previous experience of Word and a clean driving licence would be an advantage.

Please send covering letter and CV to:

Rachel Seghers (Ref: rs/AEU), Personnel Manager,

English National Ballet, Markova House, 39 Jay Mews, London SW7 2ES. Closing date for applicants 31/1/97

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BANKING SECRETARY

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Age: 21-26
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Telephone: 0171-390 7006 Fax: 0171-390 2997

Versatile PA
Liverpool Street
c£22,000 + Bens

This prestigious, private American bank require a mature and experienced PA to support their outgoing and enthusiastic UK Chairman. The position offers great variety, as well as traditional secretarial duties you will be assisting the company accountant, utilising your administrative skills and a numerate brain. City/financial background desirable. Skills: 20/50/windows and spreadsheets. Hours: 9.00-5.30/6.00pm. Age indicator: late 20s. Please call Amanda Cheson.

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c£27,000

Prestigious European Investment bank require a professional PA to support a high profile Director who is primarily responsible for staffing issues. This is an internally focused role involving extensive liaison at senior level. In addition to the secretarial support you will organise your own projects including compiling status reports and attend management meetings. A commitment to excellence, as well as good Word for Windows 80/50 and Excel. Skills: 20/50. Age: 25 to 35. Please call Claire Ashley.

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A fantastic opportunity has arisen for an experienced senior secretary with financial experience to join this busy, professional team of traders. Working for two bosses you will be involved in presentations, client contact, organising functions and special events and juggling life in general! Essential requirements are an 'A' level education and skills of 20/50/windows. Hours: 8.00-6.00. Age 24-34. Please call Claire Ashley.

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Dynamic and successful team of Equity Traders require a confident and highly organised assistant. You will be close to the action and will be involved with back up trading, organising roadshows and client lunches as well as co-ordinating the whole team. Essential requirements are a numerate brain and a flexible approach, with skills of 50wpm/Word for Windows/Excel/Powerpoint. Age 22-30. Please call Katy Burke.

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RUGBY UNION

Wainwright restored as Scotland captain

BY MARK SOISTER

HAVING proved his fitness and been included as one of only three back-row forwards in the original 21-man squad announced last week, it was a formality yesterday that Rob Wainwright would be restored to the Scotland side both as a player and captain.

He was present at the press conference at which the team to play Wales on Saturday was announced. It shows four changes, three among the forwards, from that which beat Italy in December. Damian Cronin and Eric Peters have been dropped and Ian Smith is injured. Gary Armstrong will play at scrum half in place of Bryan Redpath.

At the age of 31, having recovered from surgery on longstanding groin and Achilles' heel injuries, Wainwright will win his 25th cap and lead Scotland for the eighth time.

TEAM

SCOTLAND: B J S Shepherd (Macclesfield); A J Stannard (Bath), S Williams (Macclesfield); G P A Townsend (Newcastle), K M Lopet (Shropshire); C M Chisholm (Macclesfield), G Armstrong (Newcastle); D I W Clinton (Bath), R J Kinsella (Shropshire); C Murray, S Stewart (Macclesfield); G Mullins (Walton (Newcastle)), G W Web (Newcastle), A J Reed (Wasps), M J Wallace (Glasgow), H P Kellie (Edinburgh), R J Wainwright (Edinburgh), D J Riddell (Edinburgh); S Stark (Macclesfield), B R S Erkesson (London Scottish), B W Redpath (Macclesfield), T J Smith (Wasps), D S Munro (Glasgow Highfield/Macclesfield), T J Smith (Wasps), D G Ellis (Came)

from No 8. "I am very proud to be back," Wainwright said. "Playing for your country is special, but leading the team is something again. Having tasted that experience, you want more."

Wainwright, a doctor, who is hoping to avoid being posted to Bosnia with his Army unit later this year, said: "It might have been difficult coming back under a different captain but Gregor [Townsend] and I have a good working relationship."

Provided he performs to his own high standards in the five nations' championship, Wainwright, who ideally would have played more than four comeback games, must be a candidate to lead the British Isles to South Africa in the summer.

Wainwright said the Army were "quite keen to send me to Bosnia. I am not sure how long it would be for. They are very accommodating about my rugby, and they would realise it would not be in their best interests to send me to Bosnia for a year. It certainly

would not be in mine either, but I know there has been chat about sending me over there. It is a matter of trying to combine my commitments in rugby and the commitments of my career."

Despite continued debate, Townsend, who led Scotland in the past three internationals, finds himself still at inside centre rather than at stand-off half, where Craig Chalmers, who will be winning his fifth cap, once again links up with Armstrong, a partnership which has served Scotland well since 1990.

The backs boast 24 caps between them and it is testament to the attitude and staying power of players such as the half backs and Tony Stanger and Scott Hastings, all stalwarts of the 1990 grand slam side, that they have overcome various setbacks to once again become first choices.

Indeed David Johnston, coach to the backs, paid tribute to Chalmers's ability to change his style. "He has transformed his game over the past year. He has taken the knocks and come back well."

It is believed Johnston fought long and hard for Chalmers's retention at a lengthy meeting of the selectors on Monday, persuading his colleagues that the progress shown by the back division, particularly against Italy, should not be interrupted by switching Townsend back to No 10.

Scotland have scored six tries in their past two internationals, all by wings, and Johnston believes that the hard work which has been put in is gradually starting to bear fruit as Scotland look to play a more fluid game.

There is a less-experienced look to the forwards, the most capped of whom is Doddie Weir, who partners Andy Reed in the second row. After two lacklustre performances, the pack needs to produce a more dynamic approach.

Robert Howley, the Cardiff scrum half, failed to complete yesterday's Wales training session because of a hamstring injury, although Kevin Boring, the national coach, expressed optimism that he would have recovered by the weekend. Scott Gibbs, who captained Wales against the United States last Saturday, is still troubled by the knee injury he picked up in a 25-20 defeat of Scotland. It was instinctive, daring and yes, arrogant. He took a



A last-ditch effort by Mullins, the Australia full back, fails to stop Davies from scoring in the corner. Photograph: Mike Hewitt/Allsport

Ringmaster Davies is top of the bill

Christopher Irvine, in the last of our series, reflects on how a genius at both codes of rugby would not be denied at Wembley

In both codes of rugby football, great tries are invariably associated with special individuals, and no player has blazed a trail of glory in the two arenas quite like Jonathan Davies.

Arrogance is sometimes misinterpreted in sport. The self-belief that Davies has is not boastful. It simply tells him that he can beat his man and pull off the outrageous.

One moment at Wembley, on October 22, 1994, is burnt into the memory as sublime arrogance.

In 12 previous appearances for the Great Britain rugby league team, Davies had not faced the might of Australia.

Two days before Davies's 32nd birthday, Australian commentators wondered why he was there. In the media room at Wembley, over half-time tea, one Sydney journalist owned up to his gaffe: "Jonathan's still an old man," he said, "but geez he's quick."

He became rugby league's Barnard, and, at club level, his act was at its most brilliant one perishing January afternoon at Halifax. Seemingly non-existent gaps opened up for two solo tries for Warrington in the Challenge Cup.

Before he faced Australia, whom he rates as the best team in either code, Davies had not enjoyed the best of times on his

only other visit to Wembley, a losing appearance for Widnes in the 1993 Challenge Cup final; 1994, and the arrival of Australia, was different. The sudden resignation of Malcolm Reilly, the coach, gave Ellery Hanley seven weeks to sort out a Great Britain side.

pessimism, Alex Murphy declared that Great Britain had no chance. Davies, as usual, was a bag of nerves. His baseline for the toilet before games is now legend.

It was fear that drove the Britain side that rainy Saturday afternoon, fear of losing

THE GREATEST TRY



I EVER SAW

There were injuries galore and players were selected out of position, including Davies, a centre at Warrington, at full back.

Australia had swept all before them on the road to Wembley. With predictable

Quick hands and quicker feet outwitted bigger opponents'

and fear of not letting one another down, once Shaun Edwards, the captain, had been sent off for a moment of uncharacteristic madness.

How Britain turned potential disaster to their advantage is now part of league folklore, as much as the defeats of Australia in 1914 in Sydney and in Brisbane in 1958, when Britain both times finished with only ten players. A man down in the modern era can place impossible constraints, and Edwards's dreadful high tackle, in the 25th minute, looked to have knocked Britain out as effectively as it had Bradley Clyde.

Twelve minutes later Wembley erupted. The old place had, six months before, witnessed a spectacular score by Martin Offiah for Wigan that many felt could not be bettered. Davies trumped it with

match-winning try out of the

Bobbie Goulding began the raid in breaking left from a scrum on the Britain 20-metre line. Laurie Daley, the Australian stand-off half, was wrong-footed and the opposition cover drawn.

Half a dummy left Steve Renouf in two minds and Davies was through the gap between him and Brad Fittler.

He was now in the clear, with Gary Connolly and Jason Robinson in support.

There was no way that Davies was going to deny himself, nor was Mullins going to prevent him. Mullins made a desperate grab for his ankles but Davies launched himself and scored full-stretch at the right corner.

The shuddering tackles

made by Davies in an 8-4

victory were equally memorable, but a partially dislocated shoulder forced him to miss the last quarter. Shorn of his

inspiration, Great Britain lost the series 2-1. When Davies was appointed MBE in January 1995, that try was highlighted as his finest.

SPORT IN BRIEF

Gloucester insist Greening is staying

GLoucester, one of the few first division rugby union clubs still fielding home-grown players, have announced that Phil Greening, the England replacement hooker, is not for sale. Greening, 21, has been the subject of substantial bids from three clubs (David Hands writes).

The club also hopes to establish a code of conduct regulating the way in which players are approached by rival clubs. "If clubs want to approach Phil again they need to come to us for permission before talking to him or his agent," David Foyle, the club chairman, said. "Gloucester have some talented youngsters and our intention is to keep them and build for ourselves, not be a breeding ground for other clubs."

Salford signings

Rugby League: Salford Reds will add to the veteran status of their pack for the forthcoming season with the signings today of David Hulme, 32, and Esene Faimolo, 30, both from Leeds. They follow the arrival at The Willows last week of two other former international forwards, Andy Platt, 33, and John Cartwright, 30.

The newly appointed administrators of Hull Kingston Rovers hope to persuade the local authority to allow them to sell some of the land surrounding the club's Craven Park ground to ease debts of nearly £1 million. The club has assets of more than £25 million.

Price in final

Bowls: John Price, of Swansea, who is attempting to win the CIS Welsh indoor singles title for the fifth time in succession, and for the ninth time in 17 years, qualified for the final at the Selwyn Samuel Centre, Llanelli, yesterday with a comfortable 7-2, 7-2 victory over his young rival, Gareth Williams, from Pembrokeshire.

Event cancelled

Athletics: The Los Angeles Invitational, the second oldest indoor meeting in the United States, will not be staged this year because organisers could not find a sponsor. The event had been scheduled for February 15 at the Los Angeles Sports Arena.

No 2 seeds fall

Real tennis: Chris Bray and James Male, the No 2 seeds, were defeated 6-6, 6-3 by Hugh Latham and David Johnson, the unseeded Queen's Club professionals, in the quarter-finals of the BNB Resources professional doubles championship yesterday.

BASKETBALL

Byrd to divide time between two sports

BY NICHOLAS HARLING

ALTON BYRD will not sever

his ties with Crystal Palace

baseball club despite resigning

as coach to become general manager of the London Monarchs American football team.

"I've only stepped back from coaching," Byrd, 39, said yesterday. "I haven't resigned as a director or shareholder."

In the long term this could be a good experience for both me and Palace as it will allow me to focus on things that may solidify the club."

A pioneer among American

players who came to Britain in the Seventies, Byrd says his

decision has nothing to do with the visit to Hemel Hempstead on Saturday when Palace became the first team in 26

games to lose to the bottom club in the Budweiser League.

"My mind was already

made up," he said. "The Monarchs had already asked me

about it, the more I thought

it would be beneficial to me."

It was as presenter of Sports

on Radio 5 Live that

Byrd established strong links with American football.

Palace will not, on his

recommendation, be seeking a new coach but will rely on

Kevin Hibbs, their assistant coach.

"We're going to stick with what we've got," Byrd said.

"What would be the

point of making a short-term appointment which may prove to be totally wrong."

With the 5ft 8in San Francisco-born Byrd, a dexterous dribbler, Palace were one of the

original powers in the domestic game until he left for a five-year stay with Livingston.

Countless honours and four

clubs later, Byrd, now a naturalised Englishman, returned as player-coach to Palace, who had long since

resigned themselves to life

outside the Budweiser League.

Under his guidance they won

successive first division and

play-off doubles before gaining

promotion last summer, since when they have won only three league games.

MOTOR RACING: McLAREN BOSS LEARNS FROM MISTAKES IN PLANNING REVIVAL OF FORTUNES IN FORMULA ONE

Dennis burns links with Marlboro's past glories

BY OLIVER HOLT

THERE is a museum of sorts at the Woking headquarters of McLaren, a long gallery in which are ranged seven or eight Formula One cars. By the side of each cockpit, famous names redolent with the history of the sport and with the dominance of McLaren are inscribed. Lauda, Prost, Senna: all are there.

Yesterday, though, when the team unveiled next season's model, the McLaren-Mercedes that it hopes will end the drought of victories that has lasted for three seasons, the guests who trooped past the gallery noted that something was missing. For a minute or two, most struggled to place what exactly it was. Then it hit them.

The name of Marlboro, the cigarette brand that became synonymous with McLaren through all their glory years in the mid-Eighties, had been stripped from its prominent position on every car. It seemed sinister, at first, a bit like a Stalinist incursion into

Formula One, an attempt to turn a fallen former favourite into a non-company, to wipe it from the records.

It was down to Ron Dennis, the McLaren managing director, some people said, another example of his cussedness. Others said it showed a lack of grace, that it should not matter that the association with Marlboro ended at the close of last season and that Dennis is now trying to please a new cigarette sponsor, the German company, West.

Dennis has had his share of brickbats in the past. Some, perhaps, have been deserved. But this, perhaps, is different. It is hard to criticise a man for wanting to block out the leading symbol of a bright and successful past because he is so intent on forging a brighter future.

Dennis, in fact, was a fascinating study yesterday, a man at the crossroads between failure and success, as he and his drivers, David Coulthard and Mika Hakkinen, talked about the struggle to get back to the top step of the rostrum. This was the other side of Dennis, the one he rarely

exposes to public view, deeply thoughtful, intelligent, full of insights into his own modus operandi.

He was even willing to talk about where it all gone wrong since the season when his team won 15 out of 16 races, when its domination made

"We got to a stage when we

were winning everything, where we got too confident," Dennis said. "It was almost as if we were daring ourselves to take a wheel off the wagon and see if we could still win, see if we could win with five gears while all the other cars had six. Confidence is a weakness. I think it is a destructive force. We will never let that happen again."

It did not help back then that I was firmly under the impression that Honda would stay with us in 1993. I was under that impression because I was told they were going to stay by someone who should have known. That was an error of judgment on my part, but it was one factor in a complex situation.

"In 1993, I could not really afford Ayrton Senna, but I afforded him to the detriment of the car. Then, a lot of the highly technical aspects of racing that we excelled in were banned. It was back to basics and we had left basics behind years ago."

Slowly, though, McLaren have begun to climb their way back towards the top. They did not win a race last year, but

"I am not going to make any predictions about the new car because we just don't know how it is going to perform yet. It looks nice, but for me, I would not care if it was a flying brick as long as it crossed the line first."

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Real beauty of Beckham's goal in life

The football season so far has been filled with puzzlement and confusion: a championship that no one wants to win, a sky full of stars half-hidden by clouds of incompetence and culture-clash. Only now, it seems, are some of its themes becoming clear.

And one of these is not a star from the far-flung galaxies of Serie A, but a more homely English thing. The theme revolves around his capacity for the creation of beauty. Thus is David Beckham, who, on Sunday, scored his tenth goal of the season.

Observe that carefully-purposed ambiguity. Every one of his ten goals is a contender for the goal of the season. Last Sunday's winning goal at Tottenham Hotspur was just another. Many a player, granted that moment of time and space, might have taken on the shot. But what imp, what muse caused him to smile with the outside of his right boot?

Observe that carefully-purposed slice. Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis, the Pakistan fast bowlers, by combining swerve with extreme pace, make the ball swing very late.

'There is something stirring in these moments'

Beckham worked the same trick: he made a football, of all the unwieldy objects, behave as a stump-shattering late-in-ducker. He seemed to possess an almost painterly talent, his brush the swerve-inducing, ecstatically-sponsored Predator boots.

The skill was remarkable, but it is not the skill that has prompted all the raptures. It is not skill, but beauty that enchants. Why not? After all, the entire notion of a goal of the season is an aesthetic judgement. And the wonder of it is that you could have a perfectly satisfactory goal of the season contest if you stopped now and allowed no other contender but Beckham.

The winner would be his first, against Wimbledon: the one that followed the trajectory of a ping-pong's forehand loop, from centre circle to goal in a gloriously walloped arcing topspin lob. Beautiful indeed. This intrusion of aesthetics into a hard and brutal game is ridiculous, futile, utterly beside the point. But beauty is also the heartbeat of the game. There is something profoundly stirring in these Beckham-esque moments. Oh! What a beautiful goal!

SIMON BARNES



Midweek View

The cry is plucked from deep, and often, in adversity, reluctantly. But is it irresistible: witness Maradona's second goal against England in 1986. Beckham-esque moments always get people overexcited and talking about football as an art form. Is Beckham, then, an artist? Is there something in him that yearns for the perfect, the beautiful, even as he strives for mere victory? Is his understanding of time and place and flight an aspect of aesthetics?

What does he actually have in mind, when he shapes his shot with that right boot? Certainly it is not something he, no less than any artist, would ever wish to analyse. T. S. Eliot, seen as a terribly conscious and cerebral poet, always said when asked what a poem meant, that he did not have the least idea. I just let fly, Brian, and the image was in the back of the net.

It happens, every now and then, that a footballer will create a series of goals of perfect beauty. Matthew Tissier did so two seasons ago: Glenn Hoddle had a season *mirabilis* ten years back. He remained a wonderful player, but as a pure goalscorer, he lost that perfect Beckham-esque combination of beauty and inevitability.

Perhaps Beckham will lose it too, though he is likely to remain a fine player, for there is an awful lot more to his game than beautiful moments. But perhaps a player can be beautiful. To say that football is not that football is a hard struggle that is sometimes — and quite incidentally — like aggression. Sheerlike aggression — are more lasting.

And of course, when it comes to settled for a real bastard of a team.

The fact is that football is not art: it is a game, and the players seek not communication but victory. Nor is it a drama or a flock of birds art, but they may well be beautiful. No, the fact is that football is a hard struggle that is sometimes — and quite incidentally — like aggression. Sheerlike aggression — are more lasting.

Goals, they all count, there are no marks for artistic impression and football is about winning, not about aesthetics. To get seduced by beauty is one of the most dangerous traps in football: you ask Kevin Keegan or, for that matter, Bryan Robson.

England team. As the former manager, Don Revie, said: 'As soon as it dawned on me that we were short of players who combined skill and commitment, I should have forgotten all about trying to play more controlled, attractive football and

settled for a real bastard of a team.'

The fact is that football is not art: it is a game, and the players seek not communication but victory. Nor is it a drama or a flock of birds art, but they may well be beautiful. No, the fact is that football is a hard struggle that is sometimes — and quite incidentally — like aggression. Sheerlike aggression — are more lasting.

And of course, when it comes to

TENNIS: CAPRIATI'S RETURN TO THE GRAND-SLAM STAGE ENDS IN TEARS AND FIRST-ROUND DEFEAT

Hingis on verge of fulfilling promise

FROM MICHAEL HENDERSON IN MELBOURNE

THERE is no common experience in the ageing process. A 50-year-old conductor is a mere slip of a lad. A 20-year-old tennis player can feel hopelessly middle-aged and Jennifer Capriati, who left Melbourne Park in a flood of tears yesterday after losing a first-round match in the Australian Open to her fellow American, Jolene Watanabe, might be wondering where her youth went.

It went west, is the answer, and to be reminded of it is clearly more than she can bear. Under the gentle — some would say indulgent — probing at the press briefing after her match, she filled up and left the stage. To be sure, it was a disappointing result, but it was still a mardy performance.

"I've had my fun, all that is done, why should I ask for more? There's a younger generation knock-knock-knocking at the door," In few areas of human activity are Mr Coward's words more apt than in tennis, particularly on the disfavour side. As Capriati re-

verts to the margins of the game, Martina Hingis, four years her junior, maintains her apparently unstoppable dash towards stardom.

Czech-born, Swiss by adoption, she cuts a pulchritudinous figure and Switzerland certainly has need of a sports personality. If one were cruel, one could say it needs any kind of personality. It may have the most discreet bankers in the world, and the best waiters, but as Harry Lime said when he stepped off the Ferris wheel in *The Third Man*, 500 years of peace and democracy have produced only the cuckoo clock.

Hingis reached the second round easily, after a 6-1, 7-5 rout of Barbara Rittner, from Germany. She was warned for throwing her racket into the net in a fit of pique, after hitting a volley long, and she can pout with the best of them, but it is hard not to take her. There were some splendid backhand winners in the second set as she came from 4-1 down to win with something to spare.



Capriati, who fled her post-match press conference in tears, shows the strain during her defeat by Watanabe

Seeded fourth, which accords with her world ranking, Hingis comes to Melbourne fresh from her triumph in the Sydney International tournament last week, where she beat Capriati in the final. She is the coming young thing, just as Capriati once was. Like the American, she was weaned on the game as a lass — even named after Navratilova — and must now come to terms with the physical and emotional demands of burgeoning fame.

Capriati reached the semi-finals of the French Open at 14, and followed up a year later with similar placings at Wimbledon and at Flushing Meadow in the US Open. Her subsequent travails off the court have been well recorded, and on it she has not gone beyond the first round of a grand-slam tournament since 1993.

Hingis, a semi-finalist in New York last year, is endowed with a similar depth of talent and, more significantly, seems to have the temperament to back it up. Although — and it is an important caveat — nobody will know for sure until she proves it.

Whose head would not be turned by earnings of

\$1 million before the age of 16? A hermit, possibly. Little Miss Hingis is no hermit. Accompanied by her mother, who goes by the name of Melanie Zieg and acts as coach, lean-to and general factotum, she is already a seasoned citizen of the world. The International Management Group, the agency that directs the fortunes of many of the most successful sportsmen and women, owns a large chunk of her and this week she signed up to a whacking sponsorship deal with Sergio Tacchini.

Despite her Swiss domicile, her cheekbones testify to a Slavic ancestry and, in years to come, with a fur collar wrapped round her, she could make a smashing Anna Karenina. One or two locals here obviously fancy themselves in the role of Vronsky. A rather disagreeable youth waved a banner inviting her to give him a ring, and supplied his telephone number for good measure.

The tennis world is hoping ardently that she survives her new-found celebrity, and goes on to win the big ones. The women's game badly needs a new generation of stars now that Steffi Graf is in the

autumn of her years, and Monica Seles can no longer be the player she was. So Hingis, attended by her mother, stands on the threshold of a big career.

Wish her well. There was a startling comment on the first



Hingis must come to terms with fame

day of this championship when the 15-year-old Russian girl, Anna Kournikova, said the Women's Tennis Association should reconsider its restrictions on young players (17 and under) entering the professional game. She, too, travels hither and thither with an eager mother in tow. "Nobody can help you better than family," she said. That may be so, but the obverse is also true: nobody can hinder you more than family.

Sport, like war, has casualties and the generals of women's tennis have confused short-term gains with long-term benefits too often for anybody to be certain Hingis will emerge unscathed.

Watanabe, by the way, is 18 and comes from Arcadia, Arcadia, California, that is. If she wants to know where another place is that goes by the same name she can ask the girl-woman she beat yesterday.

Capriati lived there once — or thought she did.

Answers from page 42

ALMSFER

(b) The payment also called Peter's peace and, Rome-soft, specifically made to the pope. Blount, *Law Dictionary*, 1691. "Almsfes, that is, Peter-Pence, anciently paid in England on the first of August, and given by King *Inda*".

BONIFACE

(c) The name of the jovial innkeeper in Falstaff's *Beatrix* Stratagem, 1707. Whence taken as the generic name of innkeepers, "mine host" or "the landlord" of an inn. Walter Scott, *Waverley*, 1829, note 5: "The devolution of the whole actual business of the inn upon the poor guide wife was very common among the Scottish Bonifaces."

AZOTH

(b) The alchemist's name for mercury, as the essential first principle for all metals. Hence the universal remedy of Paracelsus. A corruption of the Arabic word.

BREVET

(a) An official or authoritative message in writing, especially a Papal indulgence, the French diminutive of *brevi* (letter). Also an official document granting certain privileges from a sovereign or government.

SOLUTION TO WINNING CHESS MOVE

White's best is to play for a draw with 1. Rg4+ f5 (not 1... Kxg5 2. Qg5+ White will 2 Qe7+ Kf6 3 Qg5+ Kg7 4 Qe7+ with a perpetual check draw).

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Doctors in wonderland; a dancer's adieu

In less than 15 seconds the damage is done. As yet another series of *Peak Practice* (ITV) gets under way, the opening titles remind us of the latest trio of highly qualified medical practitioners to grace The Beeches. They get about five seconds each – two to look either bravely beautiful or casually hand-some two-and-a-half to rush about in slow motion and a crucial half-second when they pause to acknowledge the camera. So, having neatly confirmed that these are not real people at all, it's on with the story.

I can never quite work out whether it's that that annoys me more or the music. Deep, dee-dum 'screches: something high-pitched and horrible. What is it? I've no idea; but I have a recurring nightmare of a bored producer sitting down one day and saying: "I know, we'll try real heart-strings." This tooth-piercing theme

recurs relentlessly in assorted variations. There's the romantic variation, the tearful variation, the bravely borne variation... When last night's episode began at a funeral, the one real surprise was that these four little notes couldn't manage their own *Nimrod*.

This less than subtle manipulation of our emotions also acquired a new weapon – the sky. That's right, if the colour of the sky doesn't fit the moment, someone does something clever with a camera and they change it. Is that brooding enough for you, AJ?

...and action...

Ah yes, the action – all those lingering reaction shots that the series has made its own: "Can you look a bit more bemused, Simon?" or "Any chance of just a little more hurt, Gary lover?" In both cases (Simon Shepherd plays Will Preston, while Gary Mavers is the classic car-driving Andrew Atwood), I very much doubt it.

Having said all that, however, I found encouraging signs last night to suggest that the show's inexplicable popularity will continue. Nobody clutched a steaming coffee cup to a chunky jumper (encouraging, but also something of a disappointment): the central story about the little girl with epilepsy was convincingly told and particularly well acted by Ian Burfield as her caring but incompetent stepfather, and the latest line-up of doctors looks less annoying than for some time.

Dr Preston, you see, has finally been rumbled by the General Medical Council ("Come on laddie, you can't be a doctor with a haircut like that – admit it, you're an actor") and, in a couple of episodes time, is off to pasture new. With Dr Atwood back in the fold, that left just the one vacancy to be filled, presumably by Dr Shearer (Adri-

REVIEW



Matthew Bond

an Lukis, last seen playing Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice*) I hope he's brought enough jumpers.

Rudolf Nureyev wasn't much of a pull-over man – berets and turbans were more his thing, as we discovered in *Omnibus Dancing with Darkness* (BBC1) when a succession of elaborate headgear passed before us. The timing of the film was curious (fourth anniver-

sary of deaths are not normally significant, and even less so when you miss them by a few days), but the intention was clear. This was a serious tribute time.

Teresa Griffith's film was beau-

tifully made, lovingly assembled and – helped by Alexander Balanescu's haunting violin music – deeply, deeply sentimental. A friend told us that Nureyev had always wanted to die on stage, an ambition he almost realised at the emotional curtain call for *Bayadère* in Paris in 1992. Now Griffiths gave him the posthumous chance to bid adieu again – this time on television.

No dissenting voices were countenanced and – barring a brief descent into a former New York bath-house – no startling revelations sought. Nureyev was gay, was diagnosed HIV-positive in 1984 and spent the last decade of his life battling against age and AIDS. The story of that final

Anthea Turner who, after looking high and low for a suitable vehicle for her talents, stumbled across *Pet Power* (ITV). This proved to be a cross between 999, *Hearts of Gold* and *Channel 4's Absolutely Animals*. Bit of a mongrel, then.

To judge by the first programme, the big problem is not Anthea but finding sufficient material. Tess, the life-saving labrador, was a great story (we've re-created the heart-stopping events using actors and one animal actor*) but clearly some years out of date. A rather elderly and plump labrador duly waddled into the studio to take a much deserved bow.

Still, I enjoyed *Popeye*, the jealous parrot who has set wife against husband and in his spare time strips wallpaper. According to a parrot behaviourist (I don't recall one of those on *What's My Line?*) it's because his cage is too high. Nothing worse than a parrot getting above his perch, is there?

BBC1

6.00am BUSINESS BREAKFAST (38650)

7.00 BBC BREAKFAST NEWS (1) (40116)

9.00 BREAKFAST NEWS EXTRA (1) (494368)

9.20 ALL OVER THE SHOP (805863)

9.45 KILROY (100315)

10.30 CAN'T COOK, WON'T COOK (55318)

11.00 NEWS (1) and weather (5630467)

11.05 THE REALLY USEFUL SHOW (774824)

11.45 MILLIES PEOPLE (6183134)

12.00 NEWS (1) REGIONAL NEWS and weather (794466)

12.05pm THE ALPHABET GAME (6125370)

12.30 GOING FOR A SONG (4888282)

12.35 THE WEATHER SHOW (7173592)

1.00 NEWS (1) and weather (43045)

1.30 REGIONAL NEWS (4493548)

1.40 NEIGHBOURS (1) (7485523)

2.05 POLICE RESCUE (8611776)

2.50 PUT IT TO THE TEST with Carol Vorderman (3857196)

3.00 HOLLYWOOD OUTINGS: Malaysia (1) (5626776)

3.30 PICTURES (3863944) 3.50

Chuckles (3843080) 4.10 Popes and Son (1649560) 4.35 Wild House (7626275) 5.00 Newsround (1) (4220591)

5.10 Blue Peter (1) (1867738)

5.35 NEIGHBOURS (1) (485134)

6.00 NEWS (1) and weather (841)

6.30 REGIONAL NEWS (221)

7.00 A QUESTION OF SPORT (1) (5925)

7.30 TOMORROW'S WORLD

Constraining magnetic disturbances provide an accurate way of predicting imminent earthquakes? Plus, Japan's idiosyncratic holiday resort of the 21st century (1) (405)

8.00 HOW DO THEY DO THAT? Eamonn Holmes and Esther McVey meet a circus强人 who was once paralysed; and report on the special effects in *Red Dwarf*, and the remarkable design of a gravity-defying theme park waterlide (1) (305202)

8.50 POINTS OF VIEW (1) (32321)

9.00 NEWS (1) and weather (2350)

9.30 COMMON AS MUCK The boys try to earn a little extra on the side by decorating the local church (1) (2674889)

10.45 SPORTSNIGHT Highlights of tonight's FA Cup third round replays and last night's action. Plus, a preview of the 103rd five nations' championship, which begins on Saturday, will feature tries from Murrayfield to face Scotland, and Ireland's match with the French at Lansdowne Road (2436026)

12.25pm THE LASER MAN (1988)

starring Marc Hayashi, Mariano Urbano, and Tony Keal Keung. A scientist accidentally kills his assistant, but subsequently goes on to invent a small, yet deadly laser gun... Directed by Peter Wang (5633500) WALES: Baws 3.00 Indoor Bowls (7517871) 1.05 FILM: The Laser Man (562351) 2.00 News headlines (5745932)

1.55 WEATHER (2497448)

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RUGBY UNION 45

Scotland look to Wainwright's lead in five nations'

SPORT

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 15 1997

TENNIS 46

Capriati's campaign ends in tears after first-round defeat

Scot with proven pedigree for success assumes Keegan's mantle a second time

Newcastle manage to lure Dalglish

BY ROB HUGHES, FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

SO, AFTER six days in which football became so overheated about the resignation of Kevin Keegan, his replacement has walked in to Newcastle United. It is the second time that Kenny Dalglish has replaced Keegan, after his wearing of the Liverpool No 7 shirt in 1977, but should 'carry Kenny' bring to St James' Park the championship that is eminently winnable this season, he will go where no man has trodden before.

Already, Dalglish stands level with Herbert Chapman and Brian Clough as the only managers to have won the English title with two different clubs. To gain a third, Dalglish must emulate, in a way, what he did at Blackburn Rovers — although the task is 'easy' by comparison. For, in helping Jack Walker to buy the trophy for Blackburn, Dalglish filled an empty space in the boardroom cabinet that had lasted 81 years. All he has to do for the Geordies is to put that trophy where it has not been for 70 years.

As he walked into St James' Park at six o'clock prompt last night, there were no signs of burden, no apparent heavy onus, resting on Dalglish. He looked as if he had just walked in off the 18th green. His features are slightly more rounded, less gaunt, than when he was in full training as a magnificent player, or when the management demands



took the toll that forced him to resign from Liverpool, burned out, in 1991.

Too little has been made of the harrowing impact that Hillsborough, the death of 96 Liverpool supporters, had on Dalglish. Too much had been conjectured about his departure from Blackburn, where, the task achieved, he handed the reins to his assistant, Ray Harford. He said yesterday that he had left for a

footballing reason... to try to protect Ray Harford a little bit.

Therefore, the fear on Tyneside — that Dalglish is a quitter, who runs when the stress barometer is high — is unreasoned. Remember, this is a player whose first professional mentor, Jock Stein, died on the managerial bench. Better still, remember the apparent instant rapport between Dalglish and Terry McDermott, the caretaker manager, as they sat besides Sir John Hall, the Newcastle chairman, yesterday evening.

Remember, also, that football, particularly in the modern era, is about winning. It was an opponent, the late Don Revie, who observed: 'God put Kenny Dalglish on this earth to be a winner on the football field.'

Once Alan Hansen, his former Liverpool team-mate, had publicly said that Dalglish was waiting for the call from Tyneside, once Bob Robson, the first choice of Sir John, said 'no' for the final time, then the job, the destiny, was Dalglish's.

Twenty-four hours earlier, Spaniards had nibbled on the red herring that Robson was about to defect from Barcelona. In the same hour, three Newcastle directors — Sir John's son, Douglas, among them — had journeyed to Dalglish territory in Lancashire to offer him the job.

He goes to St James' on a 3½-year contract; it seemed, last night, to take 3½ minutes for Dalglish to look settled. He leaves the arrangements for the FA Cup third-round replay against Charlton Athletic tonight in the hands of McDermott and Arthur Cox. 'They've prepared the team, I'm happy to go along with that, it would be confusing to do otherwise,' he said.

Dalglish can never, and he knows it, replace the aura of Keegan. Nobody could. Robson, the son of a Durham miner, who gave football back something rather special when he spoke of the integrity of having signed a contract, and that it could not be broken even for Newcastle, could have prolonged the Geordie connection. Sir John, looking emotionally drawn as even a multimillionaire might yesterday, certainly wanted to do so.

Yet, perhaps in time, an outsider might prove better for Newcastle's future. This has nothing to do with the share flotation, details of which will be announced tomorrow. The club insisted yesterday that the flotation was not the trigger for Keegan's sudden departure. Until and unless Keegan returns from Florida, to tell the people of Newcastle exactly what compelled him to walk away, then it is right for those at Newcastle to take it forward.

'It's no good trying to dismiss what Kevin's done as a manager,' Dalglish said.



McDermott, who will be in charge of the team tonight, shares a joke with Dalglish after the Scot's appointment as manager of Newcastle United

Old hand makes assured debut

BY LOUISE TAYLOR

PUNCTUATED by smiles, witty one-liners and eulogistic tributes to his predecessor, Kenny Dalglish's first press conference at Newcastle United managed was conducted along highly diplomatic lines.

And at Newcastle? The playing strength is inherited. Much of it is attacking force, in the cavalier spirit of Keegan. Dalglish will be wise not to tinker with anything in what footballers call 'the final third'. But he will address defence, he may return to Blackburn either for Tim Flowers or the immensely promising Shay Given. And he may also approach Blackburn for a defender, maybe even Henning Berg. Alex Ferguson, the Manchester United manager, who is also reported to be keen on signing Berg, would then know that Dalglish is back, and normal rivalry is resumed.

At that moment, Sir John, at Dalglish's right hand, looked more relaxed. 'What has happened is probably not what anyone anticipated,' he said, 'but it has happened. I want to place on record my appreciation of five wonderful years Kevin gave this club. He built a platform to look forward to the millennium, and move forward is exactly what we have to do. I'm delighted Kenny Dalglish is here to lead it, and I think you all know what he has achieved.'

Middlesbrough docked — 44 West Ham's target — 44 Simon Barnes — 46

At that moment, Sir John, at Dalglish's right hand, looked more relaxed. 'What has happened is probably not what anyone anticipated,' he said, 'but it has happened. I want to place on record my appreciation of five wonderful years Kevin gave this club. He built a platform to look forward to the millennium, and move forward is exactly what we have to do. I'm delighted Kenny Dalglish is here to lead it, and I think you all know what he has achieved.'

'It's no good trying to dismiss what Kevin's done as a manager,' Dalglish said.

The length of the contract is, as always in football, a mere figure on paper. The desire on Tyneside is immediate, and for Dalglish to win as a manager with a third club will take, he knows, a different approach. At Liverpool, he achieved continuity; at Blackburn, he showered a benefactor's money as if it invented it, and Alan Shearer — now his player again — was the symbol of that spending.

And at Newcastle? The playing strength is inherited. Much of it is attacking force, in the cavalier spirit of Keegan. Dalglish will be wise not to tinker with anything in what footballers call 'the final third'. But he will address defence, he may return to Blackburn either for Tim Flowers or the immensely promising Shay Given. And he may also approach Blackburn for a defender, maybe even Henning Berg. Alex Ferguson, the Manchester United manager, who is also reported to be keen on signing Berg, would then know that Dalglish is back, and normal rivalry is resumed.

The only instance when a flash of the old, rather more feisty, Dalglish voluntarily began talking about his intentions in youth development. 'The schoolboy and youth set-up is very important. It's something I really enjoyed being involved with at Blackburn.'

Dalglish will leave preparations for the FA Cup replay against Charlton Athletic to Terry McDermott and Arthur Cox. McDermott

is likely to continue as No 2. 'Terry is someone I know I can trust,' Dalglish said.

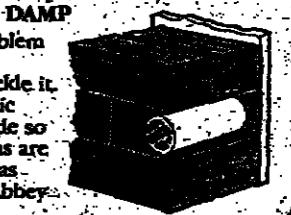
Stressing he was not about to 'start sacking' the coaching staff, Dalglish also confirmed he and his family would be moving lock, stock and barrel to the North East.

Dismissing suggestions that he might commute, Dalglish said: 'I don't want to live alone.'

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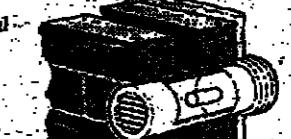
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Why I had to turn down the job and stay loyal to Barcelona

BOBBY ROBSON



gives his reasons for resisting temptation

ish. I might be old-fashioned. But, whatever happens now, however long I keep the job, at least I can feel I honoured my part of the bargain with Barcione. I have loyalty, even though there does not seem to be too much of it about in football any more.

All through my years at Ipswich, I had great offers, but I always stayed because I had a contract. Even when I was England manager and I was getting some criticism, people said: 'Why don't you pack it in?' But I saw it as a matter of

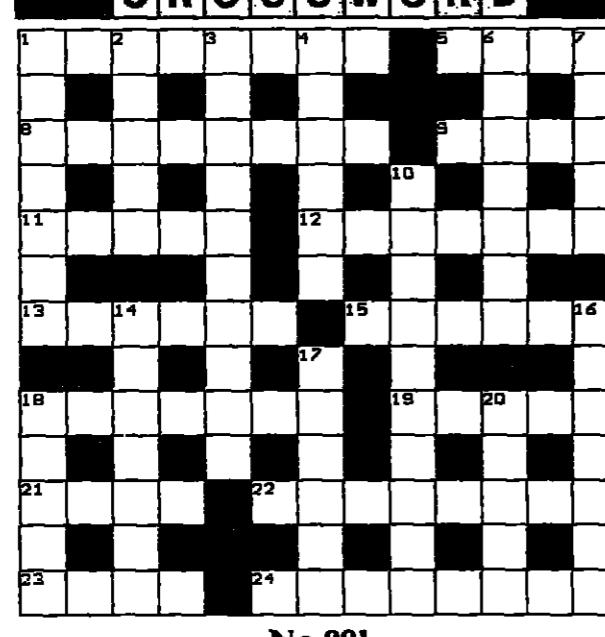
honour. My father was like that and I have got my father's blood.

I know that what Newcastle has done so far has been magnificent and the job was tailor-made for me. It is home, too. There would have been a nice symmetry about going back, but my honour and my commitment should be here in Barcelona because their honour and their commitment was to me when they brought me to Spain last August.

In some ways, I suppose it might have been easier for me to walk away if the result had gone differently on Monday. That result did not do me any favours in a number of ways. If we had beaten Hercules, we would have gone above Real Madrid to the top of the table and, if the president had given his permission, I could have left Barcelona sitting on top of the league.

But that defeat, and Sir John Hall was in the air on the way back to England, I knew that he was going to announce the name of the new Newcastle United manager last night and that it was not going to be me. So I walked down to the beach near our villa and treated myself to a glass of champagne.

My wife and I have got a great life out here and I have got plenty of blessings to come. Most of all, I am happy. I made the right decision and that my conscience is clear. I tell you one thing, thought Kenny Dalglish is a lucky guy.



ACROSS

- Free, emotional composition (8)
- Rebounding sound (4)
- Raised structure; thick sole (8)
- Upright support post (4)
- Gangway (5)
- Financial supporter (7)
- From the lips (6)
- One that vies (6)
- All-powerful cure (7)
- Lowest deck (5)
- Colleague, supporter (4)
- Unstable (8)
- (Plane) run along ground (4)
- A taking apart for examination (8)

SOLUTION TO NO 984

ACROSS: 5 Inexperience 8 Tsette 9 Apiai 10 Wish 12 Insulin 14 Hummock 15 Slug 17 Azalea 18 Abound 20 Get the hang of 21 Jigsaw puzzle 2 Kepi 3 Aviade 4 Residual 6 Pier 7 Carving knife 11 Simulate 13 Ice ages 16 Java 19 Orgy

SOLUTION TO TIMES TWO CROSSWORD 986

ACROSS: 1 Spring 4 Scorer 8 Vote 9 Wormate 10 Recherche 13 Tommy 15 Chase 16 Mitre 18 Spectacle 21 Dulcinea 22 Shyft 23 Wonder 24 Shyft

DOWN: 1 Severe 2 Reckon 3 Gower 5 Competent 6 Reap 7 Rotary 11 Excessive 12 Crane 16 Mischiev 18 Mildew 17 Sentry 19 Chaucer 20 Glen

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